











PURITAN ARCHITECTURE  
*and its future*

*By the Same Author*

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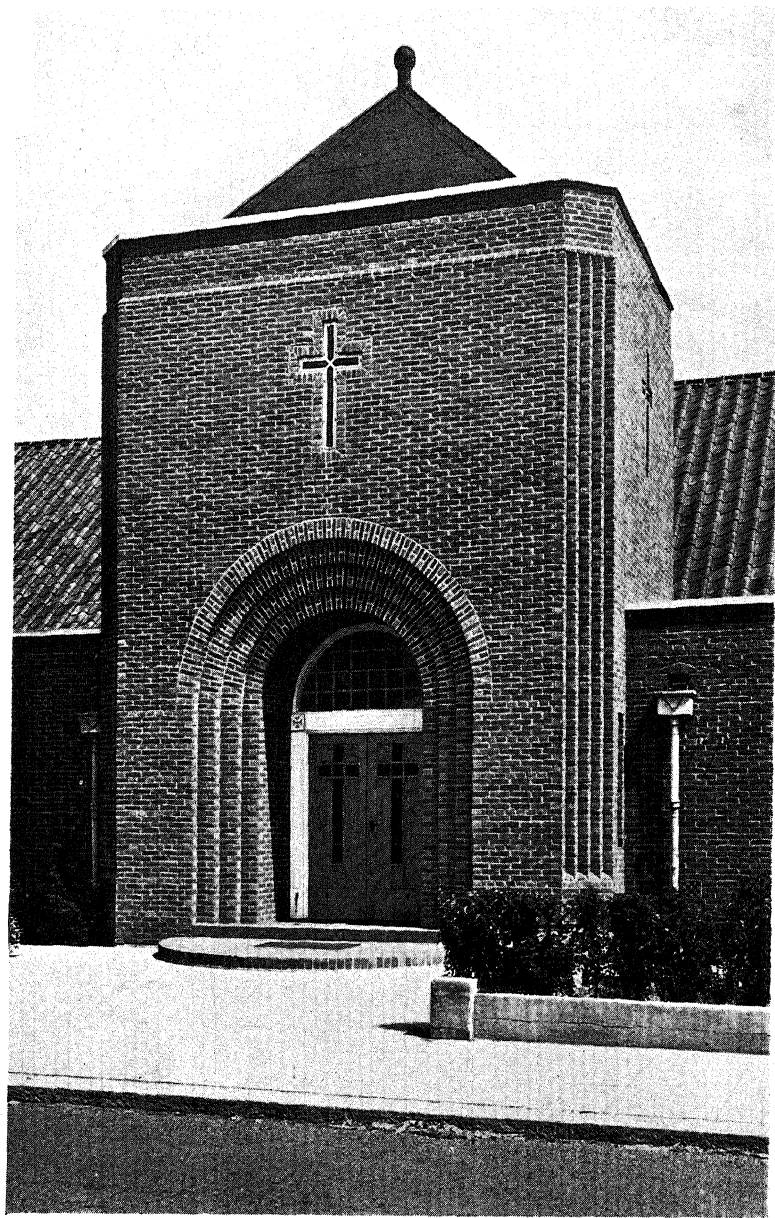
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I

PERIVALE PARK FREE CHURCH: ENTRANCE

Architect: John P. Blake, F.R.I.B.A. See also Plates XII, XIV, XV and Fig. 15

# PURITAN ARCHITECTURE *and its future*

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F.R.I.B.A. *61*

*Illustrated*



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## FOREWORD

to Dr. A. L. Drummond's *Church Architecture of Protestantism* (1934), a learned but readable volume which has been my constant companion during my own studies and has furnished me with many of the ideas incorporated in this more modest little book. I have also to thank the various architects whose names appear under the illustrations reproduced here: Mr. Ronald P. Jones, F.R.I.B.A., for the loan of the photographs reproduced on Plates IIIa, IVa, VIa, VIb, VIIa; the National Buildings Record for permission to reproduce copyright photographs on Plates IIa, IIb, IIIb, IVb, Va, Vb; the Editor of *The Builder* for the copyright photograph on Plate X; and the Architectural Press for Plates I, XI, XII, XIII, XIV and XV. The various line-drawings in the text are my own work. The plans of large London Congregational churches of the nineteenth century (Figs. 8, 9, 11-14) are reproduced to a uniform scale of 50 feet to one inch.

M. S. B.

March, 1945.



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## *Line Drawings in the Text*

Symbols used in the plans denote the following:

A—Open area; B—Baptistry; C—Choir seats; CT—Communion table;  
CL—Cloakroom; L—Lavatory; LN—Lectern; O—Organ; P—Pulpit;  
SS—Sunday School rooms; V—Vestry; X—Baptistry rooms.

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AS a result of the war, all religious bodies in England have to face an enormous building programme: partly because of the destruction wrought from the air, but partly also because of the need for them to take their proper share in the life of the new communities that are likely to spring up as the result of the rehousing of our people. Among these bodies, the various Protestant Free Churches have so many beliefs and practices in common that their architectural problem in the future may be regarded as a single whole, for there need be little difference in the ritual arrangements or the style of churches designed for modern Congregationalists, Baptists, Presbyterians or Methodists: indeed, there are many places where the three first-named bodies worship together under one roof as a "Free Church" or "Union Church".

The present moment is therefore opportune for a full consideration of the form that new church buildings ought to take, with due regard to tradition on the one hand and to modern needs on the other. Abreast of these two considerations, it must be remembered throughout our quest that, though large sums of money have already been collected for the purpose of building and rebuilding our churches, the task is so enormous that simplicity of design and construction is essential in order to limit the heavy outlay involved (and we shall not be a rich nation for many years ahead). So far from regarding simplicity of design as an obstacle to successful church-building, it seems to me to be a condition altogether in harmony with the Puritan tradition which I, as a son of the manse, am proud to inherit. In this chapter I shall attempt to show what that tradition is and how it should influence us in planning our new churches, for

I am convinced that we have neglected it too much hitherto.

Professor Percy Dearmer, who could not possibly be accused of undue affection for Nonconformity, has written that "Protestantism had the makings of a conquering intellectual movement, it is still the greatest moral force in the world; *but it has no form.*" In another passage he writes of our architecture in recent times: "The Free Churches have been of no use; they have simply borrowed stray fragments from the 'church furnishers' Catholicism of the nineteenth century." In fact, we have never made use of our tradition and have even ignored its existence altogether. My own view is, and has been for a long time, that the Free Churches, representing something quite positive and distinctive in their polity and their faith, with three centuries or more of history behind them, should be able to devise a form of architectural expression which should be equally positive and distinctive, and should not be a mere watering-down of obsolete medieval architecture.

It may seem odd to many people that this study should begin with any references to the past, for it is commonly supposed that the stark little "village Bethels" of a century ago, and the much more aggressive pseudo-Gothic chapels which constitute so regrettably large a part of the architectural output of Nonconformity, are the only buildings which our past produced. Nevertheless, any earnest student who is prepared and qualified to delve into this neglected field soon finds that, when the mists of prejudice and ignorance have been swept away, our history does provide some ideas and even some inspiration to help us in sharing current problems.

The earliest phases in the growth of "Dissent" are, however, notably barren in architectural examples, for historical reasons which must now be stated. The "Separatists" first made their appearance in appreciable

numbers about the middle of the sixteenth century, not long after the Church of England seceded from Rome in 1543, and that date coincides almost precisely with the expiry of English Gothic architecture. Hardly any Gothic churches (St. John's Church at Leeds, 1634, is a rare exception) were built in England from that time until the "Gothic Revival" some 300 years later. Thus the medieval Gothic churches taken over by the Protestant Church of England had been designed primarily for the service of the Mass: that is a point to which I shall return. For several years after 1534 there was a violent campaign of iconoclasm all over the country, when thousands of carved or painted "images" and other "Popish" trappings were systematically destroyed: *not* by Nonconformists, who had hardly begun to appear yet, but under the orders of Thomas Cromwell, the despotic leader of the Protestant party in the Church of England. His activities have been frequently and erroneously attributed to Oliver of that ilk, a man who certainly did a good deal in the same direction a century later, but who must not be blamed for all the exploits of the older and more orthodox Cromwell.

The Separatists, ancestors of the modern Congregationalists, came into prominence during Elizabeth's reign, and professed an extreme form of that Protestantism which had so recently cut itself adrift from Rome. They became so numerous that, in 1593, Sir Walter Raleigh stated in Parliament that they numbered "near 20,000", and before that date they had formed organized communities or churches (*e.g.*, in London *c.* 1578 and in Norwich *c.* 1580). Their leaders were chiefly graduates of Oxford and Cambridge, especially the latter; and many of them were people of substance, but repression and persecution prevented them from assembling openly and therefore from erecting church buildings.

The only existing Free Church building for which an

## PURITAN ARCHITECTURE

Elizabethan date is claimed is the quaint little chapel at Horningsham in Wiltshire (Fig. 1). According to the local historian, it was erected by Sir John Thynne about 1566 for the Scottish Presbyterian masons then engaged upon his palatial house of Longleat hard by. It is therefore a transplanted Scottish example rather than the first specimen of a Congregational church, though members of that denomination have been using it for centuries.

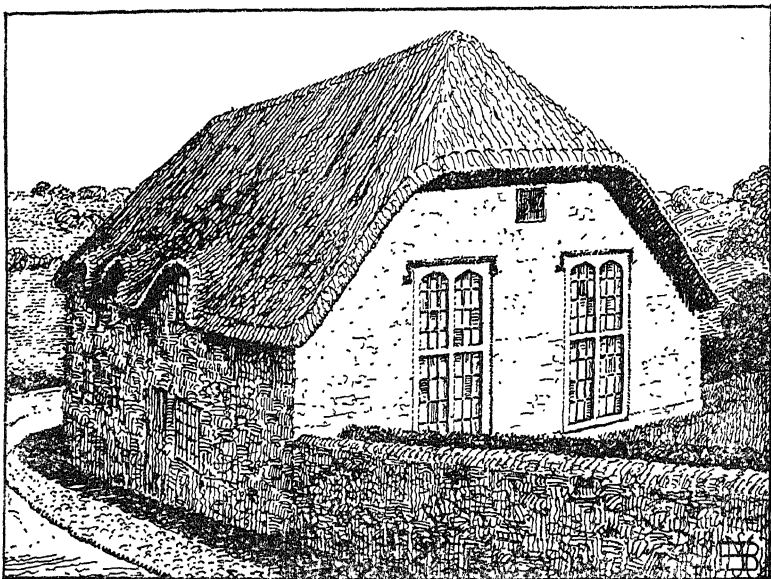
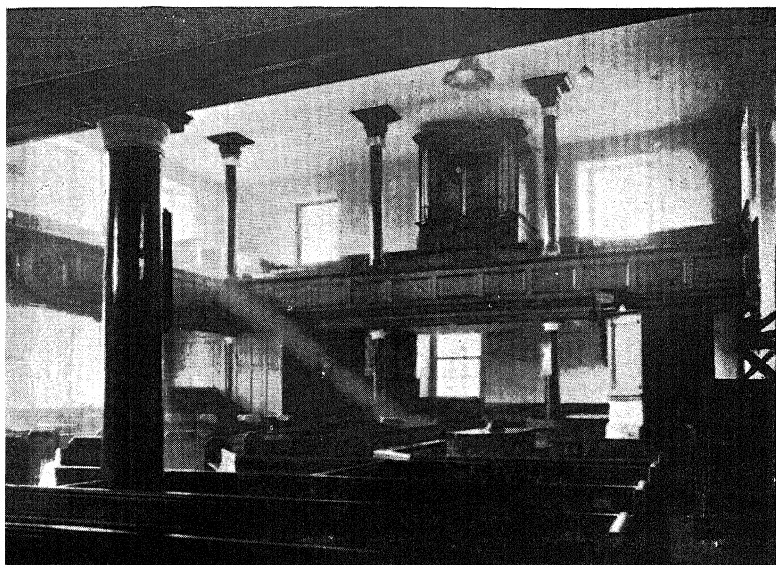


FIG. 1.—HORNINGSHAM, WILTSHIRE.

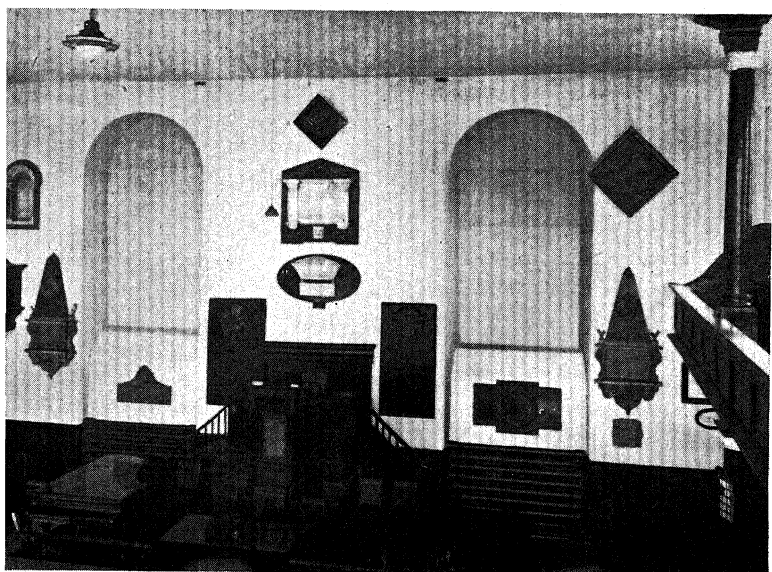
The oldest Congregational Chapel in England (1566).

There seems to be no reason to question the date carved on its gable-end. This little chapel thus provides scant evidence on which to base any idea of the first buildings of English Nonconformity, though its humble simplicity is probably an indication of what the Elizabethan Separatists would have built if they had been allowed to build at all. It may be remarked at this stage that movable wooden communion tables had replaced stone





IIa



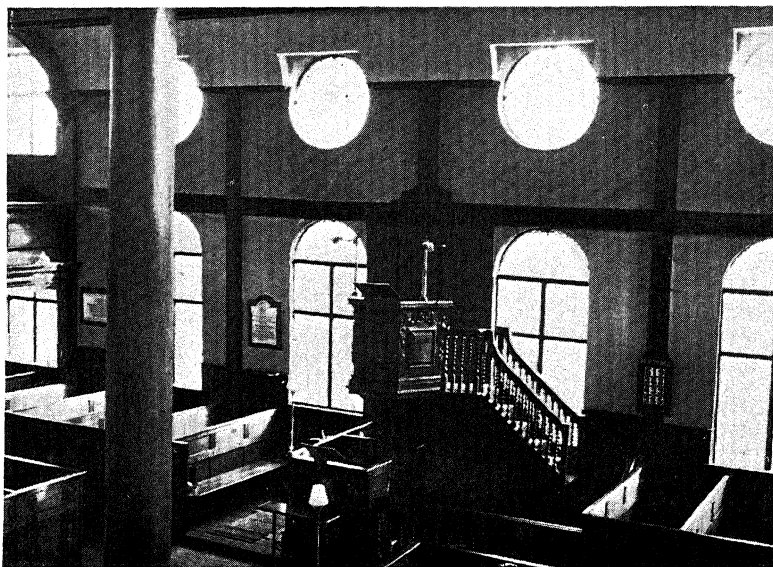
IIb

NORWICH "OLD MEETING" (CONGREGATIONAL), 1693

See p. 24 and Figs. 5 and 6



IIIa



IIIb

FRIAR STREET UNITARIAN CHAPEL (FORMERLY PRESBYTERIAN),  
IPSWICH, 1700

(a) Exterior; (b) Interior.

altars in all Anglican churches of the period, and that no reredoses or altar-frontals were permitted.

During the reigns of James I and Charles I, up to the time of the Commonwealth, the Separatist movement had perforce to remain chiefly "underground". The Conventicle Act of 1592 had driven the first organized communities overseas, to Holland; and the famous voyage of the "Pilgrim Fathers" to America in 1620 had its origin in a small band of religious refugees from Scrooby and Gainsborough—on the borders of Lincolnshire, Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire—who formed themselves into a church at Leyden. The first Baptist church in London was founded at Southwark in 1616 by Henry Jacob, an Oxford graduate who had returned from exile at Amsterdam. The number of "conventicles" in the London area was 11 in 1631, but continued to grow until it was estimated at 80 in 1640. Parallel with these Separatist activities, there was a constant spread of less downright Puritan doctrines among the clergy within the Church of England, of whom 200 were "silenced" by the canons of 1604. Circumstances still prevented open assembly or the erection of church buildings, and the congregations met in private houses, often with sentries posted outside to give warning of the approach of trouble. Further contingents of English Nonconformists went to America in 1628-30 and founded Massachusetts.

Nevertheless, a few Congregational and Baptist church buildings are attributed to this period of hardship—*e.g.*, the "Ancient Chapel" of Toxteth near Liverpool (1618, reconstructed 1773), the Baptist Chapel near the Abbey at Tewkesbury (1623), and the Congregational Chapel at Walpole near Halesworth in Suffolk (1647). Of these, I have only been able to visit the last-named personally. (See Figs. 2, 3A and 3B.) Its origin is somewhat obscure, but, according to Mr. J. W. Newby's

## PURITAN ARCHITECTURE

*History of Independency in Halesworth and District*, the front part of the present building may have been in existence some 40 years before it became a Congregational church in 1647, presumably as two cottages. On the other hand, its plan closely resembles that of "Old Meeting" at Norwich (Fig. 6), and I should be prepared to believe that it was erected as a chapel from the outset. The first minister was appointed in 1650. Like so many early Congregational pastors, he hailed from Emmanuel College, Cambridge—a noted "Hotbed of Dissent"—

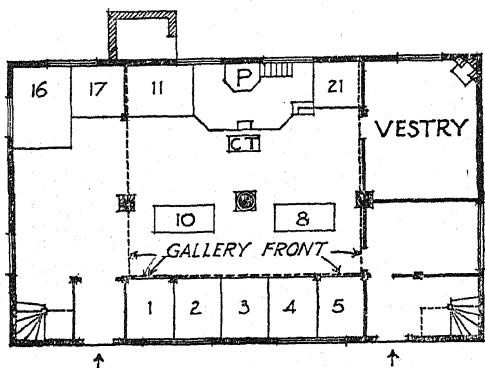


FIG. 2.—SKETCH PLAN OF THE OLD CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, WALPOLE, SUFFOLK.

The figures show the numerals painted on the doors of the original pews.

as did one of his successors, who was probably responsible for the enlargement of the building some time before 1698 when he died at Walpole. The width of the chapel was then increased to about 28 feet by the demolition of the back wall and the construction of a second gable, shown on my sketch; but the original gallery over the front part of the building with the curious range of five pews beneath it was left standing, the side galleries were extended to the new back wall, and the ancient two-decker pulpit with its quaint sounding-board was retained. Of the three pillars inserted to carry the new

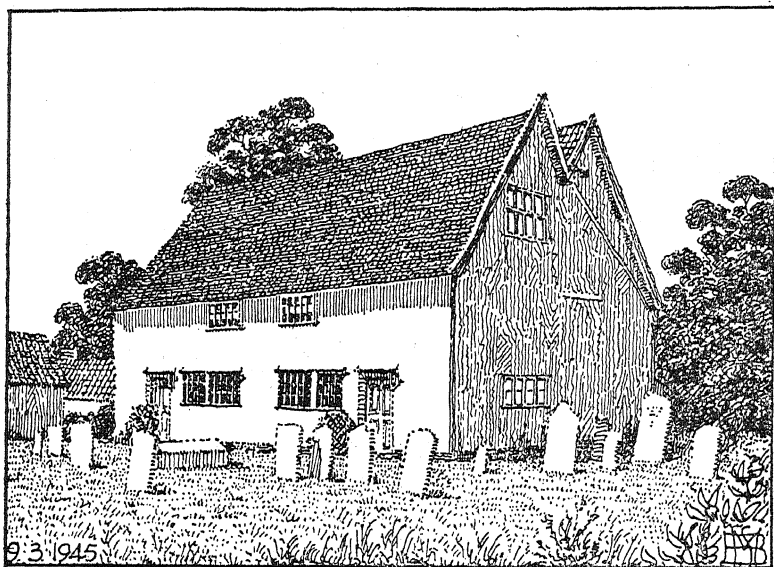


FIG. 3A.

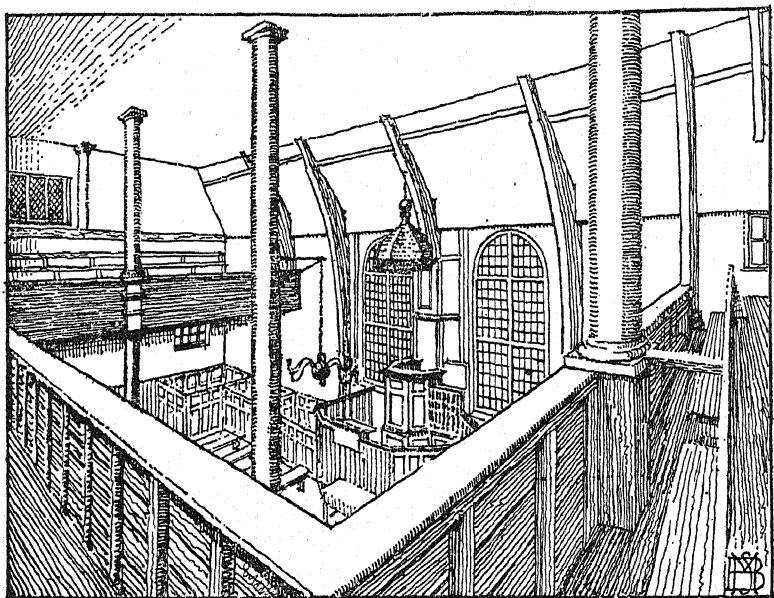


FIG. 3B.—THE OLD CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, WALPOLE, SUFFOLK (c. 1647).

3A. Exterior.

3B. Interior.

roof, the central one is 15 inches in diameter and is said to be a ship's mast brought from Great Yarmouth. The internal woodwork generally is very rustic, and suggests the village carpenter of a poor community—a great contrast to the opulent furniture of Norwich "Old Meeting". Nevertheless, the two round-headed and leaded windows flanking the pulpit do resemble the typical arrangement in prosperous town chapels of the period.

About 1900 the building was restored and some of the pews replaced by "more comfortable modern forms"; the graveyard, opened *c.* 1840, was also extended. A further restoration, at a cost of £130, took place in 1930. Since that date, there has been some little deterioration, and signs of "war damage" in cracked window-panes and fallen plaster. It seems to me that this rare example of a primitive meeting-house is worthy of preservation as a denominational relic: there is nothing quite like it in England. The cost of internal renovation would be very small, but probably beyond the resources of a tiny village. No gaudy colour-scheme would be appropriate to such a modest shrine. Competent architectural advice should be sought so that this little chapel might typify the beginnings of our Puritan architecture, and Congregationalists in England and America might be asked to contribute towards the project.

Box Lane Chapel near Boxmoor in Hertfordshire bears an inscription that it was founded in 1600 and rebuilt in 1690. The present building (dreadfully restored in 1876) appears to be of the later date, but contains a Jacobean communion table. As already mentioned, Anglican churches of this period are extremely rare, and the best example, St. John's at Leeds (1634), is a Gothic building with fine Jacobean interior fittings.

The period of the Civil War (1642-49) was naturally

unfavourable to the building of churches of any kind, and it was during this period that the notorious Dowsing carried out his "purge" of "Popish images" in East Anglia under Oliver Cromwell's instructions. The only excuse that can be offered for all this destruction of beautiful things is that it was done when passions were running high on both sides: against the violence done to inanimate objects of art must be set the violence done to human beings. The Puritans were not all iconoclasts and Philistines, but they had suffered great provocation.

When they came into power with the establishment of the Commonwealth (1650), the relative position of the Church of England and the Nonconformist sects became so confused that it is hard to disentangle such facts as bear upon my thesis. Admittedly a large number of clergymen were turned out of their livings by Cromwell on the alleged grounds that they were incompetent or actually bad men: the total number does not seem to be known. It is also admitted that many of these livings were handed over to Nonconformists, but Dr. John Brown says of the "Independents" (*i.e.*, Congregationalists) that "even in the modified form in which the Establishment had existed under the Protectorate from 1653 to 1660, their churches had remained outside the State arrangements".<sup>1</sup> Dr. Selbie, on the other hand, says that the Independents did accept some of these livings.<sup>2</sup> There seems to be no doubt, however, that Independents and Presbyterians made use of Anglican churches, including some of the cathedrals (*e.g.*, Wells, Exeter, Worcester) for their own services.

The only existing Nonconformist church building attributed to this period, so far as I know, is the Baptist Chapel at Sutton-in-the-Elms, about 7 miles S.W. of Leicester, for which a date of 1650 is claimed. Investiga-

<sup>1</sup> J. Brown, *Restoration to Revolution*, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup> W. B. Selbie, *Nonconformity*, p. 109.

tion on the spot shows, however, as so often happens, that the claim is unjustified. The date of the original foundation need not be questioned, but the present chapel is a comparatively modern building, though the little annexe beside it may well date from the seventeenth century.

Another example which might possibly be regarded as a Nonconformist building is the small stone family chapel at Bramhope, on the road between Leeds and

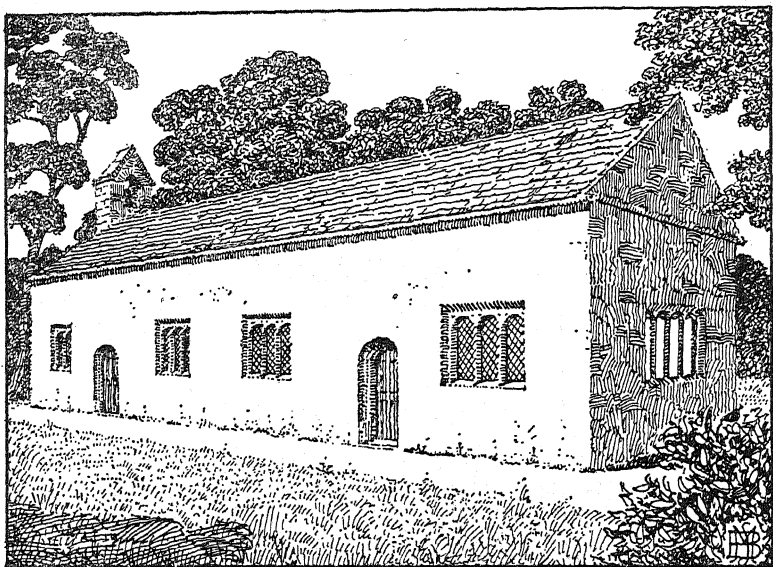


FIG. 4.—A PURITAN FAMILY CHAPEL AT BRAMHOPE, YORKS (1649).

Otley, erected by Robert Dyneley of Bramhope Hall in 1649 (Fig. 4). He was "an ardent and unswerving Puritan" who left an endowment to provide "towards the maintenance of an able and godly minister"; but the building came under the jurisdiction of the Church of England at the Restoration in 1660. It is a plain but picturesque little structure, a belated survival of Gothic, and its homely interior certainly suggests a Puritan atmosphere. Even older, in fact medieval, is St. Mary's



Chapel at Broadstairs (assuming that it has survived Hitler's attacks), which was first equipped for "Protestant" worship in 1601, thanks to its ownership by the Culmer family, leading local gentry who were Puritans. Except during a brief hiatus about 1830-37, it has been used for Congregational services ever since, and still serves as a Congregational mission-hall. Under the Commonwealth, according to Professor Trevelyan, Nonconformity was supported by many of the upper class, and it was not until the end of the seventeenth century that it came to be regarded as a "plebeian religion". Nevertheless, some local historians wrote bitterly of the use of Anglican churches by Dissenters. Thus, one courteous Christian refers to the occupation of the fine nave of Holy Trinity Church at Hull by Independent soldiers of the garrison for their "filthy conventicle"; but rejoices later that by 1683 the town was "for awhile cleared of these wretched vermin".

In 1662, as every schoolboy knows—or as every Free Church schoolboy should know—there came, hard on the heels of the Restoration, that savage attack on Dissent within the Church of England which drove out 2,000 clergymen from their livings by the passing of the Act of Uniformity. The Church thus took its revenge for the brief spell of Nonconformist supremacy during the Commonwealth, and then it followed this cruel measure by other attempts to crush Dissent once and for all. According to John Richard Green, the men evicted in 1662 "formed about one-fifth of the English clergy. . . . No such sweeping alteration in the religious life of the Church had ever been seen before"; not even during the Reformation or under Elizabeth or Laud. Even during the Civil War "the change had been gradual, and had ostensibly been wrought for the most part on political and moral rather than on religious grounds. The parsons expelled were expelled as "malignants" or as "unfitted

for their office by idleness or vice or inability to preach". But in 1662 "the rectors and vicars who were driven out were the most learned and the most active of their order". . . . "They stood at the head of the London clergy" and "occupied the higher posts at the two Universities". Since the Reformation, their party "had played the most active and popular part in the life of the Church". (Green, it may be observed, was an Anglican clergyman, not a Nonconformist.)

As a result, in spite of all the strife that had marred the relations between the various dissenting bodies during the Commonwealth, "a common suffering soon blended the Nonconformists into one". For a few years the persecuted and harassed ministers met their flocks secretly, and mainly in private houses. There were exceptions, however: the very brutality of the treatment accorded to the outcasts by the official Church aroused much sympathy for them among the mass of English people, and one even reads of the Dean of Lichfield annoying his Bishop in 1664 by reserving the best seats in the nave of the cathedral for a couple of Nonconformist aldermen.

The pendulum soon began to swing back again, and political trouble induced Charles II to sign a Declaration of Indulgence in 1671-2, allowing non-Anglican places of worship to be licensed. Within ten months, no less than 2,500 licences were issued, but it appears that most of the meetings were held in private houses or public rooms. This Declaration was revoked shortly afterwards. It was followed in 1687, however, by an Act of James II suspending all laws against Nonconformity; and then by the Toleration Act of 1689 under William III, a measure of condescension with a rather limited scope. Yet its effect was remarkable and instantaneous.

During the next eleven years (1689-1700), 2,418 buildings were registered for public worship by Congregationalists, Baptists and Presbyterians; besides scores

of Quaker meeting-houses with somewhat different ritual requirements. The Rev. Dr. Whitley, a learned authority on the early history of Dissent, informs me that "no licence was required for building. The promoters or owners or tenants *notified* to the Bishop or to quarter-sessions that such and such a building would be used for Protestant dissenting worship (or was about to be erected for the purpose), *required* an official entry to be made, and *claimed* a copy of the entry. Instances are well known where magistrates misunderstood, refusing to register, and were therefore humiliated at next sessions by mandamus from King's Bench to do so instantly. On the other hand, the certification and registration never implied that the building was used solely or chiefly for worship." This date, 1689, is, nevertheless, most significant as a landmark in the history of Nonconformist architecture.

Of the large number of chapels built between 1688 and 1721, the greater part have been rebuilt—mainly in the pseudo-Gothic style beloved of the Victorians—but the following is a brief list of some which have survived in whole or in part. (Several of the examples named were originally built as Presbyterian chapels, but in later years became Unitarian and still remain so.)

1688	Bridgwater, Dampiet Street.	1699	Northampton, Doddridge Chapel.
1689	Knutsford, Brook Street.		Sheffield, Upper Chapel.
	Macclesfield, King Edward Street.	1700	Ipswich, Friar Street.
1690	Boxmoor, Box Lane.		Tottlebank Chapel, near Ulverston.
1692	York, St. Saviourgate.	1707	Frome, Rook Lane.
1693	Norwich, Old Meeting.	1708	Leicester, Great Meeting.
	Stockport, Dean Row.	1711	Bury St. Edmunds, Churchgate Street.
1694	Chesterfield, Elder Row.		Chinley.
1697	Newbury, Waterside.	1714	Portsmouth, High Street.
	Hull, Dagger Lane.	1715	Manchester, Cross Street.
1699	Gloucester, Unitarian Chapel.	1721	Taunton, Mary Street.
	Lewes, Westgate.		Crediton.

As I propose, in the latter part of this little book, to argue that the early meeting-houses provide us with some useful ideas for the future, it is necessary now to give some general idea of their characteristics, which in fact showed a good deal of similarity. Of the larger examples, "Old Meeting" (Congregational) at Norwich, and the chapels just cited at Taunton, Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds may be taken as typical. (See Plates II, III, IV, V, VIb, and Figs. 5 and 6.) The smaller examples, naturally, are less ambitious in their design. Yet both large and small are of a modest, retiring and domestic nature, without spires or definitely ecclesiastical features externally. Most are built of brick, often of notably good brick, as was usual in the "Wren" period; and indeed the brickwork of the chapel at Bury St. Edmunds is particularly refined in design. The roofs were usually covered with plain tiles, or, in East Anglia, with pantiles; and generally were "hipped"—that is, sloped on all sides and without gables. The doorways had the normal classical pilasters or columns found in all buildings of that period, but were seldom ornate. The windows had flat or semicircular arches over them, and were divided into small panes by stout leadwork between wooden mullions and transomes. Oval windows are to be found in the chapels at Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds. The introduction of sash-windows at Norwich in 1693 was an innovation.

The disposition of the windows, and the whole design of the exterior, was conditioned by the interior arrangements, but the unobtrusive external appearance of the buildings may be attributed not only to considerations of cost (which were paramount when so many meeting-houses had to be erected simultaneously from the pockets of the congregations) but also because—even in an age which was tolerant compared with the preceding period—Nonconformity was still subject to attacks from

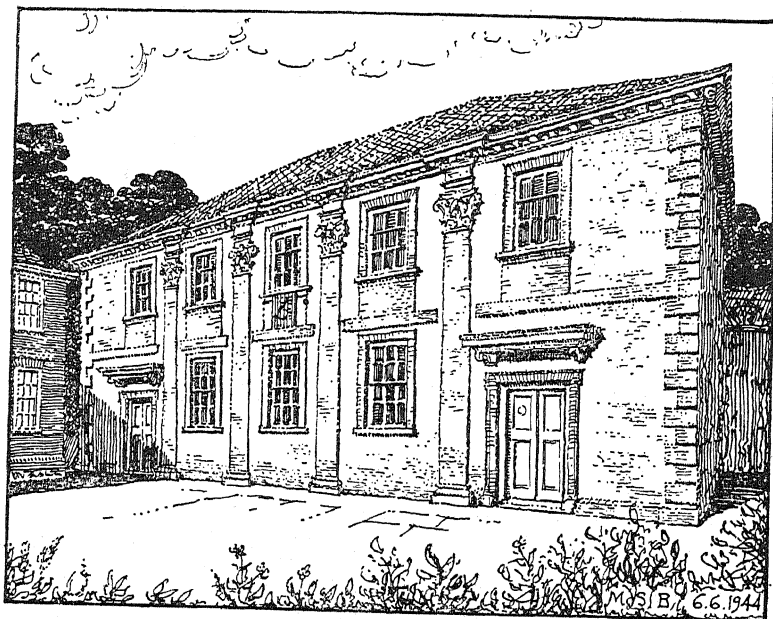


FIG. 5.—NORWICH "OLD MEETING" (1693). EXTERIOR.

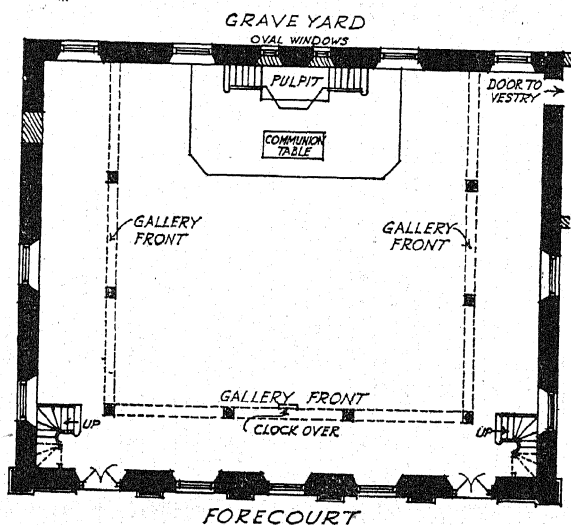


FIG. 6.—SKETCH PLAN OF NORWICH "OLD MEETING."

Church mobs, Jacobite mobs, anti-Jacobite mobs, and other organized hooligans, who burned down a large number of the new meeting-houses before the middle of the eighteenth century.

The interior of these buildings was planned primarily as an auditorium, where every member of the congregation could see and hear the preacher. This method was also applied to contemporary Anglican churches, as will shortly be explained. The plan was almost invariably oblong, without chancel or transept or apse. Galleries were provided in all the larger examples, as in Wren's larger parish churches, solely to increase accommodation without adding unduly to the size of the building and thus making the acoustic problem more difficult. Ceilings were flat. The considerable area of the auditorium raised difficulties in roofing, and usually the hipped roof was in two sections supported on a row of massive timber columns across the middle of the church. This arrangement gave rise to the unpleasant feature technically known as "unresolved duality" and to other difficulties of planning; Wren overcame these in his larger galleried churches by having two rows of columns which also supported the galleries and were treated as Roman "Orders" with appropriate features. Nonconformity had to build its sanctuaries without subsidies from the State, and was therefore less able to indulge in such desirable but expensive refinements of design; but in some cases (*e.g.*, at Taunton, Plate VIb) the supporting columns are worthily treated. Nevertheless, parsimony was by no means the universal characteristic; and Professor Hannah, in his *Heart of East Anglia*, has written thus of Norwich "Old Meeting": "The fittings are of the plainest and their materials of the best; monuments of the simplest bear blazoned arms and one or two inscriptions in Latin tell of the culture of the rest. In its imposing austerity, the old chapel speaks

of a deep but simple faith." (Plate II and Figs. 5 and 6.)

The walls and ceilings of the meeting-houses were usually whitewashed, thus affording a contrast with the wood panelling (often excellent) of the gallery fronts and the pews. The pulpit was generally large, with some carving, and a sounding-board or canopy over it. Obviously it was regarded as the central feature of the chapel, but it was usually placed in the middle of the longer side, not at the end. Organs do not seem to have been provided in these early meeting-houses, though choral music was always a feature of the services and often reached a high standard. Isaac Watts (1674-1748), who wrote "O God, our help in ages past" and so many of the hymns sung in churches of all denominations to-day, was a Congregational minister. Artificial lighting was furnished by candelabra, and the fine brass examples at Taunton and Ipswich, possibly of Dutch workmanship, recall similar specimens still to be seen in Holland. Altars were, of course, forbidden; but some well-designed communion tables still survive.

It is commonly said that these austere and dignified but rather domesticated buildings do not "look like churches". The same stricture applies equally to most of the contemporary Anglican churches designed by Wren and his school except that many—but not all—of the Anglican churches possessed spires. It was never the intention of their builders, Churchmen or Nonconformists, that they should resemble the medieval churches built for "Popish" worship in the Gothic style, which was then unfashionable and remained so for another century or thereabouts. Wren had a great quarrel with his ecclesiastical employers about the shape of St. Paul's Cathedral, which he wanted to plan as an auditorium in the form of a Greek cross, while the clergy pressed for, and ultimately obtained, a Latin cross plan suited for

processions. Wren argued that he was designing for "Protestant" worship, and that fact explains his attitude. In a recent amusing book,<sup>1</sup> Canon J. O. Hannay ("George Birmingham") puts these ironical words into the mouth of one of his fictional characters: "Brought up in England, in strictly Anglican circles, I should not willingly call myself a Protestant, which I have always been taught to regard as a term of abuse." It may not have been so bad as that in Wren's day, but evidently his employers at St. Paul's Cathedral hesitated to accept the term "Protestant" whole-heartedly, hence all the trouble. We, as unrepentant Protestants, do accept and welcome the distinction.

Between the time of Luther and that of Wren (say 1540 to 1660) various attempts had been made in Continental Europe to evolve a distinctively Protestant church-plan, and in Germany sundry novel experiments had been tried: *e.g.*, the omission of the central aisle and the placing of the pulpit over the altar, with the organ and a small gallery for singers above the pulpit (as at the Schlosskirche at Schmalkalden, 1590). The German churches built in large numbers to replace those destroyed in the Thirty Years War of 1618-48 were usually very plain, oblong in shape, with whitewashed walls, flat ceilings, and wooden galleries. Pulpit, altar and font were grouped together as a *Prinzipalstück*. About the time of Wren was developed the *Zentralbau*, a square auditorium with a *Prinzipalstück* as just described. Protestant "temples" of polygonal form were built in Holland and France after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1598: the Oostkerke at Middelburg (1655) is a case in point. The building which inspired many of these churches was the "Temple" at Charenton near Paris, designed in 1623 by Salomon de Brosse, the celebrated architect of the Luxembourg Palace. It was an

<sup>1</sup> *Over the Border*, p. 121.



enormous structure, seating 5,000 persons, and was frankly planned as an auditorium. It had a barrel-vaulted ceiling and two tiers of galleries. The architecture was characteristic of its period, but distinctly severe. In all countries, the Reformed or Protestant churches showed a determination to avoid the florid type of Renaissance design known as "Baroque",<sup>1</sup> which had been enthusiastically adopted by the Jesuits and typified the Counter-Reformation. Protestants inclined to the more austere kind of Renaissance design favoured by Wren in this country, though he could plunge into Baroque on occasion, as in the case of many of his ornate steeples and the rich carving executed for him by Grinling Gibbons.

Wren's views on the design of "Protestant" churches are worth our attention. They are summarized in a letter which he wrote when about eighty years of age, based upon his experience of rebuilding a large number of London City churches after the Great Fire of 1666; this letter was addressed to those responsible for erecting a further instalment of 50 new churches in London under an Act passed in 1711. He begins with a recommendation that all burials should take place in suburban cemeteries, half a mile or so from each church, and adds that a ring of such cemeteries would "bound the excessive Growth of the City": an admirable idea. "In these Places beautiful Monuments may be erected; but yet the Dimensions should be regulated by an Architect, and not left to the fancy of every Mason; for thus the Rich, with large Marble Tombs, would shoulder out the Poor; when a Pyramid, or good Bust, or statue on a proper Pedestal, will take up little Room . . . and will be properer than Figures lying on Marble Beds."

He then recommends church-sites in wide streets, but considers that orientation is unimportant if any difficul-

<sup>1</sup> See my book, *Baroque Architecture* (1913).

ties are caused thereby. As for external appearance, "such Fronts as shall happen to lie most open in View should be adorned with Porticos, both for Beauty and Convenience; which together with handsome Spires, or Lanterns, rising in good Proportion above the neighbouring Houses (of which I have given several examples in the City of Different Forms) may be of sufficient Ornament to the Town, without a great Expence for enriching the outward Walls of the Churches, in which Plainness and Duration ought principally if not wholly to be studied".

After some hints on building materials and their proper use, he proceeds to argue that, on a basis of relating church attendance to population, each of these new churches should accommodate about 2,000 persons. "The Churches must therefore be large; but still in our reformed Religion, it should seem vain to make a Parish-church larger, than that all who are present can both hear and see. The *Romanists*, indeed, may build larger Churches, it is enough if they hear the Murmur of the Mass, and see the Elevation of the Host, but ours are to be fitted for Auditories. I can hardly think it practicable to make a single Room so capacious as to hold above 2000 Persons, and all to hear the Service, and both to hear distinctly, and see the Preacher. I endeavoured to effect this, in building the Parish-church of St. James's, Westminster, which, I presume, is the most capacious, with these qualifications, that hath yet been built; and yet at a solemn time, when the Church was much crowded, I could not discern from a Gallery that 2000 were present."

As to the position of the pulpit, he writes: "A moderate Voice may be heard 50 Feet distant from the Preacher, 30 Feet on each side, and 20 behind the Pulpit, and not this, unless the Pronunciation be distinct and equal, without losing the Voice at the last word of the Sentence,

which is commonly emphatical, and if obscur'd spoils the whole Sense." . . . "By what I have said, it may be thought reasonable, that a new Church should be at least 60 Feet broad, and 90 Feet long, besides a Chancel at one End, and the Belfry and Portico at the other. These Proportions may be varied, but to build more Room, than that every Person may conveniently hear and see, is to create Noise and Confusion."

Here are his comments on seating: "A Church should not be so filled with Pews, but that the Poor may have enough room to stand and sit in the Alleys, for to them equally is the Gospel preach'd. It were to be wish'd there were to be no Pews, but Benches; but there is no stemming the Tide of Profit, and the advantage of Pew-Keepers; especially too since by Pews, in the Chapels of Ease, the Minister is chiefly supported."

About a third of Wren's fifty-odd churches had been demolished by the Church authorities before 1939, another third were gutted during the air-raids of 1940-41; but from those which remain—and from vivid recollections of those recently destroyed—I can briefly outline their characteristics here. They were all admirably planned for their *Protestant* purpose, many of them on small cramped sites. They differed from contemporary Nonconformist meeting-houses mainly in their richer decoration due to the funds available, in the slightly greater prominence given to the communion table, and in their general possession of fine organ-cases, usually placed over the "west" end—*i.e.*, over the entrance-end which, as already stated, was not at the west end if circumstances made any other orientation preferable. Galleries were provided in some of them with the sole object of gaining additional seating within easy hearing of the pulpit, and graceful spires were often, but not always, used. Outside London, churches of similar date or a little later—*e.g.*, St. Philip's at Birmingham

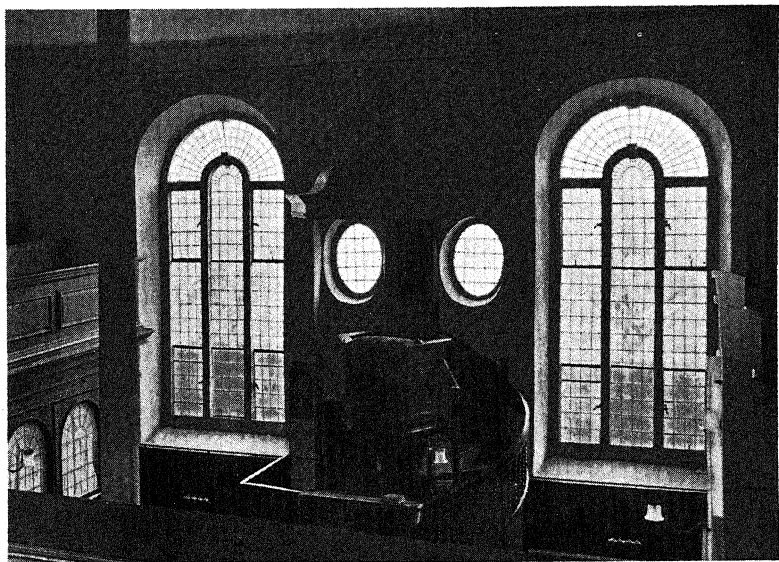
(now the Cathedral, 1711-19, by one of Wren's pupils) and Holy Trinity in Boar Lane at Leeds (1727)—exhibit most of the same characteristics. *No Anglican church erected between the reigns of Charles I and William IV—that is, during a period of about 200 years—was built in the Gothic style.*

The same applies in the United States, where a number of charming churches in the same "Georgian" style were erected all over the Puritan states of New England. In America there was no need for the Congregational sanctuary to hide itself in a byway for fear of destruction by mobs. On the contrary, it formed the central feature of each little township, and many of its kind still stand, white-walled, each with a graceful spire of classic design, at the head of the village green.

When George Fox began his itinerant preaching in 1647, it does not seem to have been his intention to found a separate religious body, still less to provide it with special buildings. Indeed, he wrote in his *Journal* (I, 8) that "The Lord showed me clearly that he did not dwell in these temples which men had commanded and set up, but in people's hearts". It is sad to relate that the Quakers were persecuted by Cromwellian Nonconformists almost as bitterly as the latter had been persecuted by the Church of England; but in the fulness of time they too availed themselves of the Toleration Act, and took out licences for over 100 meeting-houses in the next two years. Among these, the really charming example at Jordans in Buckinghamshire (1688) is probably the best known, and has become a place of pilgrimage for devout members of the Society of Friends. There are, however, many others of the same period still surviving in quiet corners of English towns, and they display many characteristics in common with Congregational and Presbyterian meeting-houses of similar date: above all, the crowning virtue of simplicity. Alone

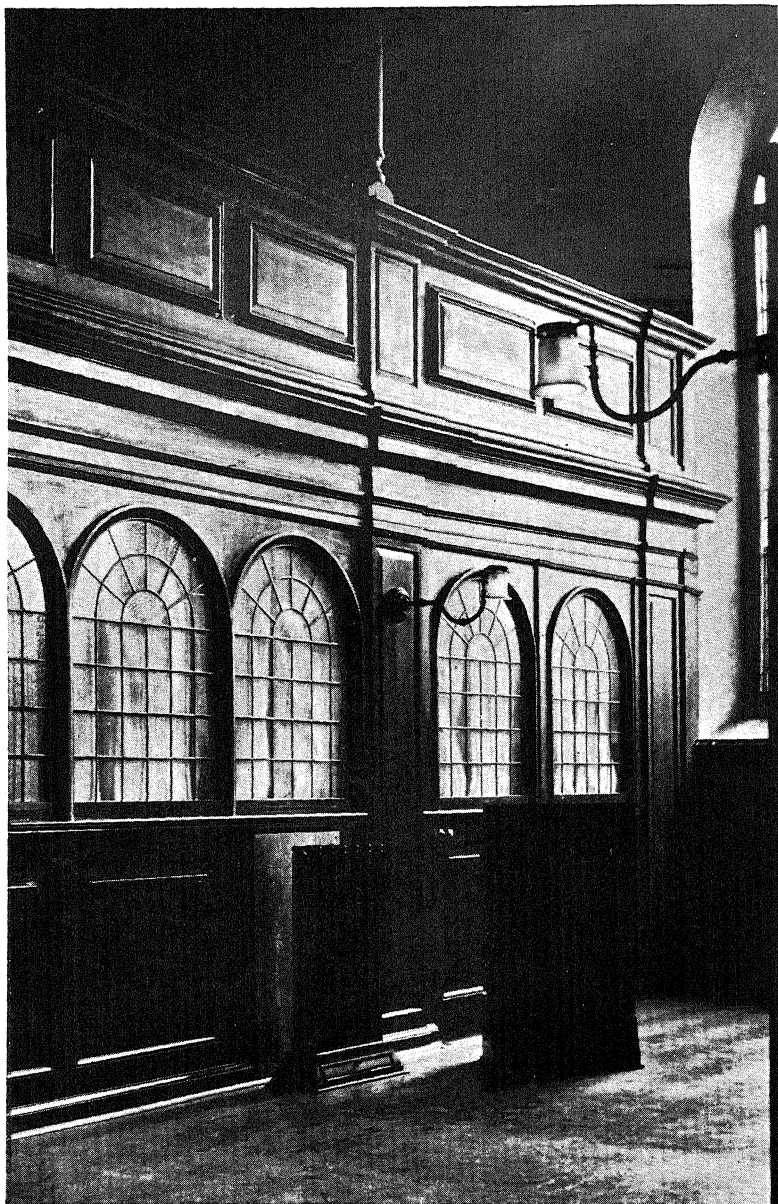


IVa



IVb

CHURCHGATE STREET UNITARIAN CHAPEL (FORMERLY PRESBYTERIAN),  
BURY ST. EDMUNDS, 1721  
(a) Exterior; (b) Interior.



V

DETAILS OF WOODWORK AND SCREEN UNDER GALLERY, IN CHURCH-  
GATE STREET UNITARIAN CHAPEL (FORMERLY PRESBYTERIAN),  
BURY ST. EDMUNDS

among the English Nonconformist bodies, the Quakers have remained impervious to the seductive blandishments of Gothic, and have maintained their architectural integrity. So, although they differ from us in having no professional clergy and no music, we have much to learn from their buildings.

For the remainder of the eighteenth century, and through the first half of the nineteenth—when the Gothic Revival began to influence Nonconformist architecture—meeting-houses continued to be built in a somewhat similar style but in smaller numbers. The word “chapel” made its appearance about the middle of the nineteenth century, seemingly not as the term of contempt which it afterwards became, but because the first Methodists regarded their buildings as places of worship subsidiary to the parish churches to which they still professed allegiance. In any case the word was rather ridiculous, and has now assumed an implication of inferior status which is hotly resented in some quarters. One suspects that its employment furnished a frequent stimulus to Nonconformists to attempt a foolish rivalry with the parish church in the matter of spires and traceried windows. But for a long time there was no trace of this among Congregationalists, Baptists, and English Presbyterians (who, as I have said, mostly became Unitarians in England during the early eighteenth century). The following is a short list of typical surviving “chapels” or meeting-houses built between 1722 and the end of that century:

1722 Chowbent, Atherton (Lancs.).	1736 Maidstone, Earl Street.
Hinckley, Great Meeting.	1739 Bristol, Penn Street Tabernacle.
1727 Ringwood, St. Thomas's Chapel.	1742 Underbank Chapel, Stan- nington (Yorks.).
1728 Aston Upthorpe (Berks.).	1746 Tenterden (Kent).
Fulwood, near Sheffield.	1750-55 Lyme Regis.

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1754-56	Norwich, Octagon Chapel.	1777	Poole, Skinner Street.
		1791	Bristol, Lewin's Mead.
1760	Exeter, George's Meeting.	1794	Bridport.
		1795	Bath, Trim Street.

Among these, the Octagon Chapel at Norwich is *facile princeps*. It was designed by one Thomas Ivory, a very able carpenter who turned architect and is now

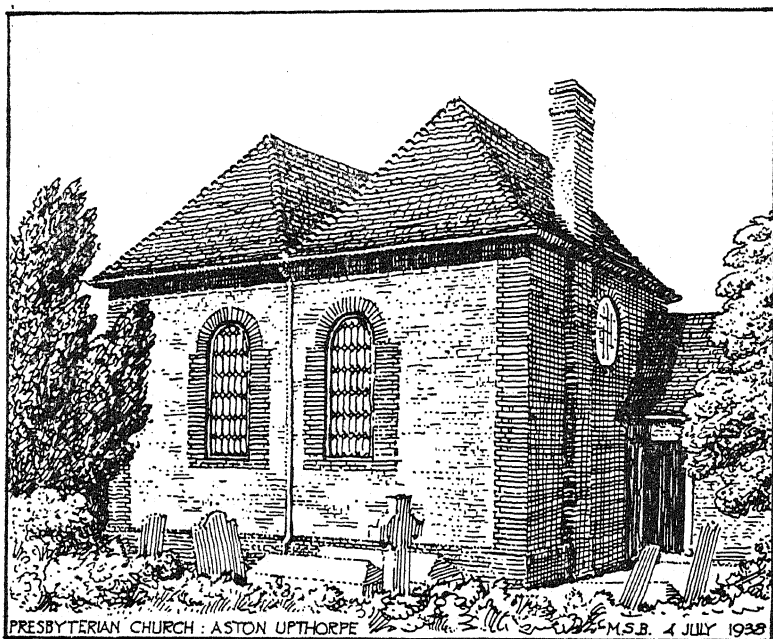


FIG. 7.—PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH AT ASHTON UPTHORPE, BERKSHIRE.

regarded by critics as an outstanding example of a provincial practitioner. As its name implies, it is octagonal in form, with galleries all round and a central dome supported on eight finely proportioned columns. The pulpit stands opposite the entrance, with the organ (a later addition) behind it in the gallery, and the communion table beneath it. It is an impressive interior of the auditorium type, it suggests a place of worship rather



than any secular building, and it is worthy of a prosperous city.

The little Congregational Chapel at Lyme Regis is an excellent specimen of the meeting-house type previously described, with the characteristic double-hipped roof in two spans supported on oak pillars treated as Roman "Orders", galleries round three sides, and a pulpit in the middle of the fourth side (the long side facing the entrance). In all respects this is an admirable and scholarly design, yet history relates that the minister himself acted as architect, foreman and joiner, completing the whole building in nine years. I do not quote this as a precedent to be followed at the present time, but it is undeniably interesting if not indeed unique. The chapel is of rubble stonework, plastered externally, and the roof is covered with thick grey slates.

Four miles west of Sheffield, at Stannington, is another small meeting-house ("Underbank Chapel", Unitarian) which is also built of stone and is even more academic in design, evidently inspired by the Palladian architecture of Italy, which was then much favoured in England (Plate VIa). It may not "look like a church", in the sense of a medieval Gothic church—none of the early meeting-houses ever attempted to do so—but externally it does look like a Protestant place of worship, and skilled architectural critics of to-day regard it, as well as the chapel at Lyme Regis, as an excellent design. The chapel measures 42 feet by 33 feet internally, and is about 20 feet high from floor to ceiling.

Writers on English life in the eighteenth century usually picture the state of religion—whether Anglican or Nonconformist—as torpid, and it is generally hinted that Dissent was now contentedly slumbering after its long persecution during the preceding century. There may be some truth in this, but one must also remember that Nonconformists were still excluded from all respons-

ible positions under the State as well as from the universities. They had to pay Church rates, and they were forbidden to conduct funerals or marriages. It was only within living memory that the last of these disabilities were removed, and even to-day there are vested interests which preserve a trace of the ancient prejudice and tyranny.

The religious revival inaugurated by Wesley and Whitefield was in no way engineered by the then existing Nonconformist bodies: it originated within the Church of England and was hostile rather than friendly to organized Dissent. John Wesley himself was an enthusiastic High Churchman while at Oxford, and it was no part of his plan to separate himself from Anglicanism, still less to build chapels for his adherents. He was an ordained clergyman who preached indoors when a pulpit was offered to him and out of doors when it was not. Inevitably, however, the fervour of his crusading, which was not invariably favourable to the Establishment, led to the closing of churches to him and his crowds of followers who tended to disturb the fat Georgian calm described by historians. The same experience befell George Whitefield, another ordained clergyman and Oxford graduate, for whom the Countess of Huntingdon built in 1739 the huge "Tabernacle" (somewhat on the lines of the French Protestant *Temple* already described, p. 28) in Tottenham Court Road, London. It was not, to say the best of it, a beautiful building, but it was infinitely preferable to the hideous and vulgar structure, now a Congregational church, that occupies the site to-day.<sup>1</sup> Wesleyan chapels now began to spring up all over England, resembling in general design the Congregational and Presbyterian meeting-houses already described, and not unlike the Anglican churches designed by Wren and his followers.

<sup>1</sup> Demolished by enemy action during March, 1945.

It was in 1777 that John Wesley himself, at the age of 74, laid the foundation-stone of his "New Chapel" in City Road, London, which still stands in the midst of much air-raid damage and is still regarded as a Mecca for Methodists from all over the world. As originally built and as it still survives, it consists of a large oblong space or auditorium with galleries round three sides and a shallow apse in the middle of the fourth. The ceiling was and is flat, but was replaced by a replica of the old ceiling after a serious fire in 1879. The communion table is of admirable design and stands in its original position in the apse, enclosed by a graceful balustraded rail, also original. Formerly the pulpit was a "three-decker", but its height was lowered from 15 feet to 10 feet in 1864. It is a handsome structure of mahogany, but as it stands in front of the apse, it still blocks the view of the communion table from the auditorium. In front of the pulpit is an enclosure containing the font, seats for the choir, and the console for the modern organ, which is placed in the west gallery over the entrance and opposite the pulpit. Prior to 1882, there was no organ, and the singing was led by a precentor, who occupied the lowest stage of the pulpit and used a tuning-fork. Frequent and considerable restorations of the chapel since it was built have modified many of its features, usually in the way of over-elaboration, but it remains a building worth study, and may be taken as typical—together with the Congregational and Presbyterian meeting-houses listed on pp. 23 and 33—of Nonconformist architecture before the Gothic Revival. Wesley's own house, adjoining the chapel, contains the beautiful furniture which he owned, showing a connoisseur's taste.

In his interesting book on *The Gothic Revival*, Sir Kenneth Clark states (p. 125) that the first modern

Gothic church of any type to be erected in England was built in 1792. To readers who may not be familiar with the genesis of that remarkable movement, it may be explained that its origin was partly literary and romantic, partly antiquarian. Horace Walpole not only wrote that extraordinary romance *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764, but built for himself in 1754-59 a hideous mock-Gothic house, now used as a training-college, at Strawberry Hill near Twickenham. At that time, Gothic architecture had long been regarded as something barbarous and unworthy of study, so for some years the new fashion spread slowly, and the churches built in that style during the early years of the nineteenth century were mere caricatures of their medieval prototypes. Soon, however, books of engravings of Gothic buildings came to be published, notably Rickman's *Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of Gothic Architecture* (1819); and, after a time, Anglican churches, or some of them, became less ludicrously inferior to their ancient models. A perfect craze for ecclesiology arose in clerical and academic circles, stimulated by the "Oxford Movement" in the 'thirties, and by the middle of the century the new fashion had spread widely.

It seems first to have infected Nonconformity early in Queen Victoria's reign, but for another thirty or forty years many of the Dissenting chapels continued to be built in some variant of Roman or Greek architecture. In the public library at Colchester I found a tract published locally in 1863, by one J. A. Tabor, with the significant title *A Nonconformist Protest against the Papacy of Modern Dissenting Architecture imitative of Roman Catholic Churches*. Essex has always been a "Hotbed of Dissent", and "Tabor" is a good old Essex name. However, it probably dawned upon Free Churchmen of early Victorian days, conscious of their growing political power, that the sense of social inferiority under which

they had smarted so long might be removed, or at least mitigated, if their despised "chapels" were made to "look like churches" of the new Anglican kind. So, without yet abandoning their galleries, their central pulpit on a rostrum, or any of their internal furniture, they proceeded to Gothicize the exteriors of their chapels, regardless whether their limited resources and—too often—limited architectural skill were equal to providing an effect which would satisfy informed and discerning critics. It was thus that the starveling spires, the shoddy tracery and the hideous coloured glass of these mid-Victorian chapels came to be derided more bitterly than the solid Georgian classical chapels or the squat and homely "Little Bethels" ever had been; for the "Gothic" examples are manifestly pretentious, and snobbery is much more detestable than simplicity. There is no need to describe here in any detail the buildings thus produced: they are only too familiar in most of our towns and many of our villages, but some of the larger examples are too blatant to be ignored.

Even before 1850, some Nonconformist churches had been fairly closely modelled on medieval tradition, and the black but comely Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel (1848) in the City Square at Leeds is said to have been the first to be furnished with a proper chancel. But, for long after that date, others were erected in the hitherto popular classical style. Among them was the huge "Spurgeon's Tabernacle" (Baptist, 1860) with accommodation for 5,000 people and with three tiers of galleries; also Dr. Joseph Parker's no less celebrated "City Temple" (Congregational, 1874) on Holborn Viaduct, both in London. These were planned for enormous congregations who travelled from remote suburbs every Sunday to hear a popular preacher. It is one of the misfortunes of Nonconformity, possibly avoidable, that London contains so many "white elephants" of this kind which

have become almost empty as the prosperous bourgeoisie from which Dissent draws so much of its support has migrated ever outwards, leaving a "depressed area" behind. (This is a point to be considered in the next chapter: see p. 57.)

The first very large Congregational chapel in London to be erected in the new pseudo-Gothic style was Christ Church in Westminster Bridge Road (1872), which, like the City Temple, has suffered severely from bombing. It occupies a very prominent and very noisy site at the junction of two busy roads, and is surrounded by shabby property which must inevitably be rebuilt soon on modern lines. It replaced the older "Surrey Chapel" (1783), and contains 2,500 seats. The striking exterior, with its really magnificent stone spire, looks Gothic enough and is a very skilful design, but the no less skilfully planned interior (Fig. 8) takes the form of a Greek cross enclosing a central octagon. Three arms of the cross are occupied by large galleries; the fourth arm, slightly shallower than the others, contains the communion table and side-pulpit, flanked by the choir-seats and the organ. Undoubtedly this is one of the most successful attempts made by Nonconformists to reconcile a very large auditorium with a medieval appearance. One factor in its success was the amount of money available: this was partly subscribed by American Congregationalists, who met the entire cost of the tower and spire. The construction is of stone, and a tolerable standard of craftsmanship has been achieved.

Across the neighbouring bridge lies Westminster Chapel (Congregational, 1863-65), where the same number of seats was provided at about a quarter of the price. One hesitates to describe it as "Gothic": a charitable critic might liken its brick exterior, rather vaguely, to some of the Italian Romanesque churches lauded by Ruskin. The huge interior, 120 feet by 67 feet

## THE PURITAN TRADITION

exclusive of the organ-recess, is nearly oval in form and has two tiers of galleries. The ceiling is flat, and there is a terrific rostrum and pulpit. Oddly enough, many people have commented upon the devotional atmosphere maintained in these apparently unfavourable surroundings.

After Christ Church, the next important experiment

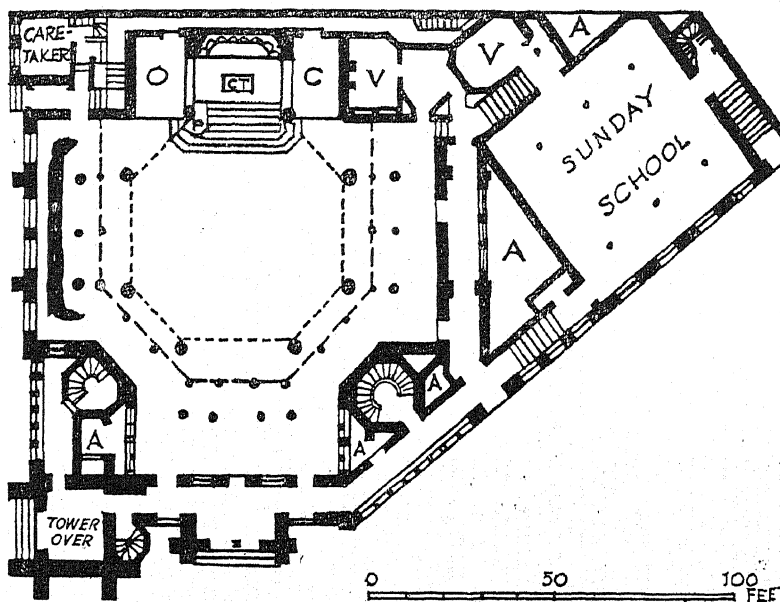


FIG. 8.—PLAN OF CHRIST CHURCH (CONGREGATIONAL), WESTMINSTER BRIDGE ROAD, LONDON (1872).

*Architects: Paull and Bickerdike.*

in the planning of a large Congregational church in London was Union Chapel, Islington (1876, Figs. 9 and 10), designed by James Cubitt, who wrote several thoughtful books on Nonconformist architecture. Here he was instructed to provide 1,650 seats, and he too adapted a modified Greek-cross plan enclosing an octagon, with galleries occupying three arms of the cross. The organ fills the shallow fourth arm opposite the

## PURITAN ARCHITECTURE

entrance, over which is a massive square tower with a gallery above the vestibule. The style may be described as Continental Romanesque, and the material is brick. The octagon has a wooden roof or lantern (a precedent for which occurs at Ely Cathedral) as compared with stone vaulting over the octagon at Christ Church,

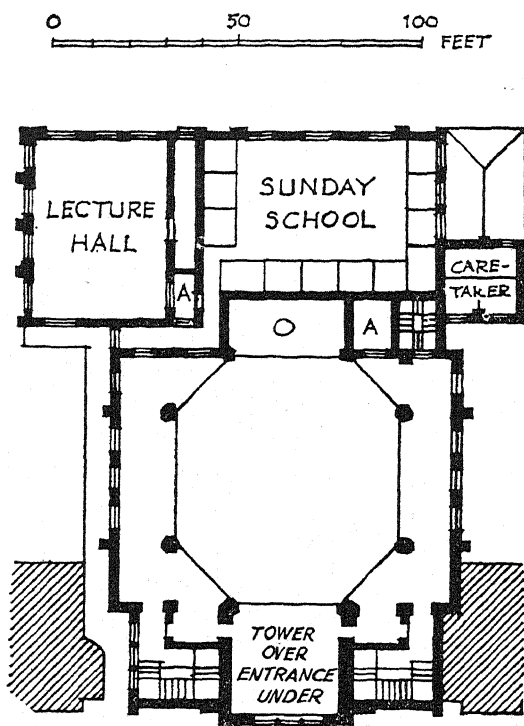


FIG. 9.—UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON: PLAN AT GALLERY LEVEL.

*Architect:* James Cubitt, F.R.I.B.A.

Westminster Bridge Road. It is another clever and original design; but, since the former prosperity of Islington has departed, the present population must find it difficult to maintain so huge and imposing a church.

Two more large Congregational churches, in Mayfair and in Hampstead, were planned on most original lines



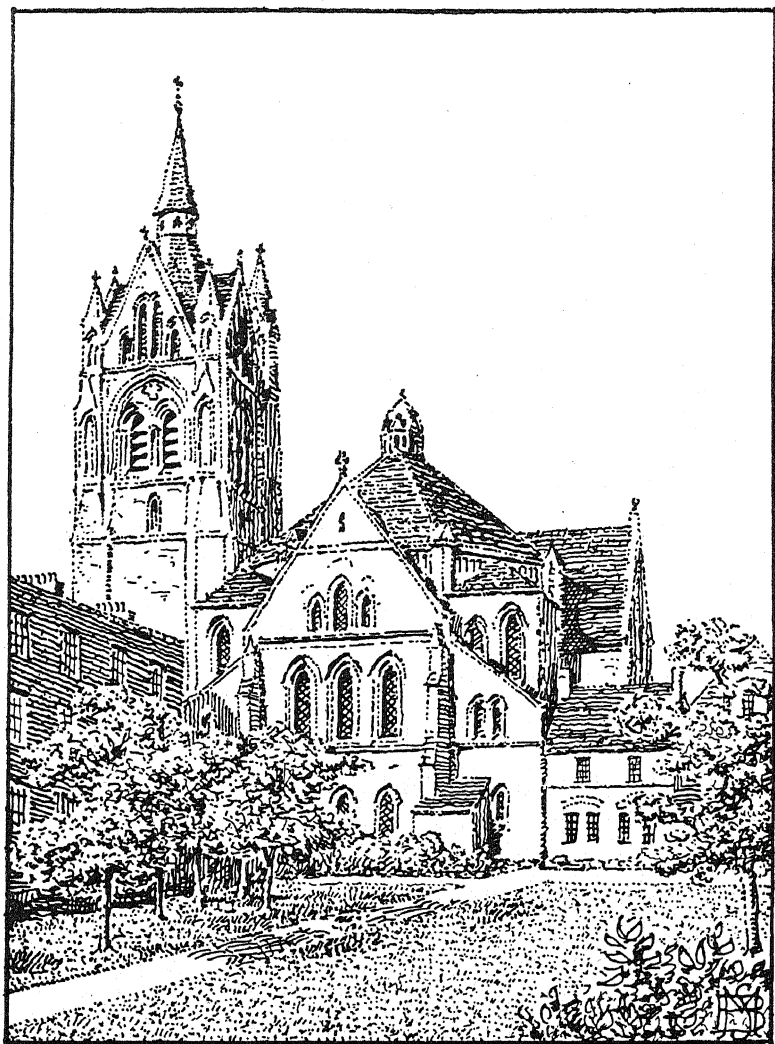
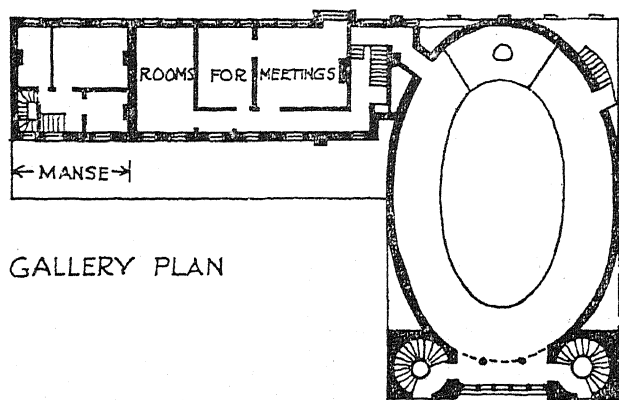


FIG. 10.—UNION CHAPEL, ISLINGTON.

by the famous architect Alfred Waterhouse, R.A. The King's Weigh House Church in Duke Street (1891, Figs. 11 and 12) has suffered from bombing; and, shortly before that catastrophe, it had attracted much

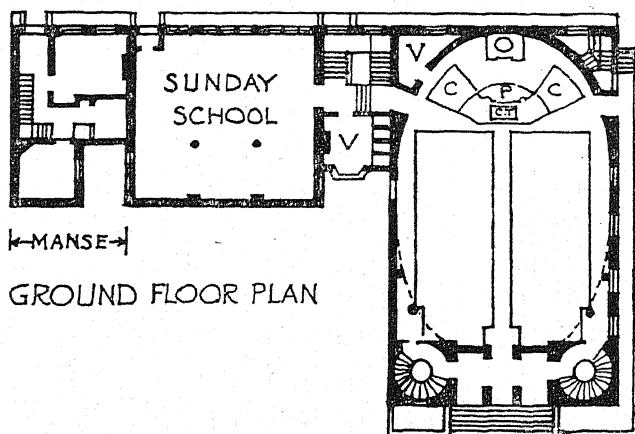
# PURITAN ARCHITECTURE

attention as the only place in England, if not on earth, where you could see a "Congregational" minister in full canonicals officiating at Mass in front of a full-blown



GALLERY PLAN

0 50 100 FEET



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

FIGS. 11 AND 12.—THE KING'S WEIGH HOUSE CHAPEL (CONGREGATIONAL), MAYFAIR, LONDON (1891).

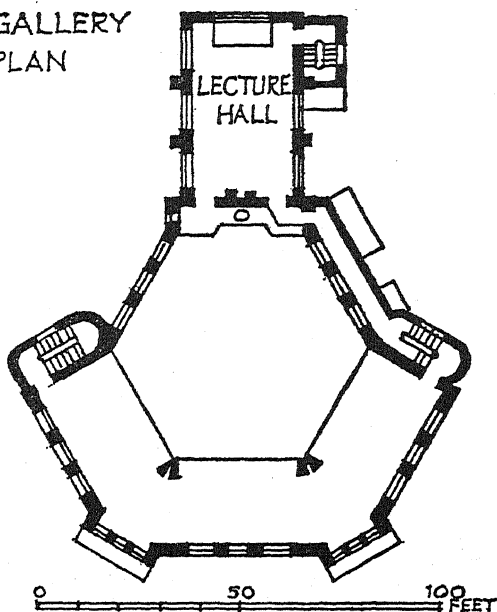
*Architect: Alfred Waterhouse, R.A.*

altar! Externally, it is typical of the "Waterhouse Style" that produced the Northern Universities as well as the Natural History Museum: Romanesque of a unique kind,

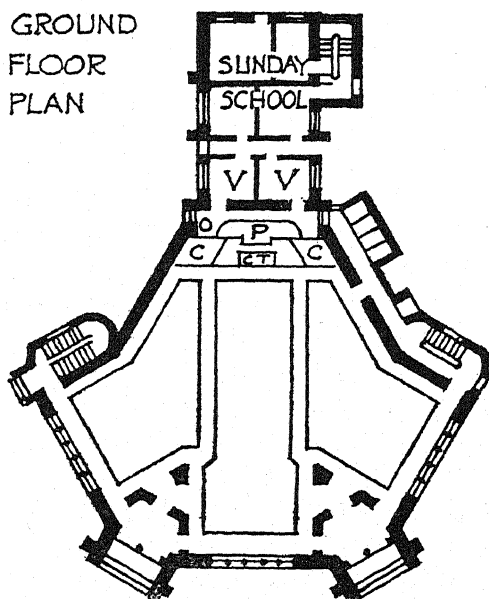
executed in brickwork liberally decked out with terracotta. There is a tall spired tower over one flank of the façade, which partly masks the oval shape of the auditorium. Waterhouse's designs soon passed out of favour, but it is his planning which concerns us here. The auditorium well deserves its name, and galleries surround it completely, as the organ stands in the portion of the gallery facing the entrance. Only 900 seats are provided, 600 downstairs and 300 upstairs, yet the cost of the building, including subsidiary rooms in a wing, amounted to £60,000. The pulpit in the original design stood in front of the organ, and the choir was placed obliquely to the seats in the auditorium, on the whole a satisfactory arrangement. Since it was built, sundry changes have been made in the lay-out of the church to satisfy the extraordinarily un-Protestant taste of some of its recent ministers.

Lyndhurst Road Chapel at Hampstead (1895, Figs. 13 and 14) was built for a popular preacher, Dr. R. F. Horton, who, after being President of the Union at Oxford, had attracted to his services a large number of the *intelligentsia* of that highly prosperous suburb. Alfred Waterhouse was again employed, and had to provide 850 seats, which he did at a cost of about £8,000. In this case he adopted a less aggressive style for the exterior, using plain brickwork and omitting a tower. The plan is an irregular hexagon with deep galleried projections on three adjacent sides, and a shallow recess for the organ opposite the entrance. The pulpit is placed on a rostrum in front of the organ, with seats for the choir on each side, arranged obliquely as at the King's Weigh House Chapel. Entrances and staircases fill the angles between the projections containing the galleries. There is nothing medieval or Gothic about this interior, but when I knew it 40 years ago the atmosphere of the church seemed to me distinctly devotional, much of that effect being due

GALLERY  
PLAN



GROUND  
FLOOR  
PLAN



FIGS. 13 AND 14.—LYNDHURST ROAD CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, HAMPSTEAD, LONDON (1895).

*Architect:* Alfred Waterhouse, R.A.

to the personality and manner of its devout and scholarly minister. Yet he combined with Oxford culture very strong anti-sacerdotal views, which—according to one critic—found some expression in the design of his church.

One more example of an experiment in Nonconformist church-planning by a famous architect may be mentioned: the "Free Church" at the Hampstead Garden Suburb, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1911. It stands in a wide open space or campus, on a slight eminence, in the centre of this finely-planned suburb, with the Anglican church of St. Jude on the opposite side, and the Institute—as the common meeting-place for secular purposes—occupying a third side between them. The Anglican church, also by Lutyens, is very lofty with a tall spire; while the Free Church, for once, is a much more modest and Protestant-looking building with a squat little dome; but both are in dark brickwork. Internally there is a barrel-vaulted ceiling (usually considered bad for sound, cf. p. 70) and a refreshing air of simplicity. A floor sloping downwards from the entrance to the rostrum is an innovation. The arrangement of the organ at the end opposite the entrance, with the choir seated below it (facing the congregation) and the pulpit and communion table on a rostrum, presents a jumbled effect and hardly solves a difficult problem.

Abreast of these typical experiments in planning the larger London Congregational churches, made similarly by the Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist bodies in all the chief cities of England, another very different tendency was at work: viz., the building of large Nonconformist churches on the orthodox medieval cruciform plan, complete with nave, aisles, transepts, and chancel. These are sometimes described, rather artlessly, as "Nonconformist cathedrals" because of their definitely

Anglican form and their correct use of Gothic structural features as well as of Gothic ornament. Typical examples are Albion Church at Ashton-under-Lyne (Congregational), Trinity Church in Woodhouse Lane at Leeds (Congregational, 1900), the Congregational Church at Otley (1899, see Plate VIII), and the Coats Memorial Church at Paisley (Baptist, 1893). They are invariably and inevitably expensive, and reach a high level in their class. Occasionally they display an altar instead of a communion table, the pulpit is placed against the angle of the chancel arch, and in every respect they follow the normal lay-out of an Anglican Gothic church.

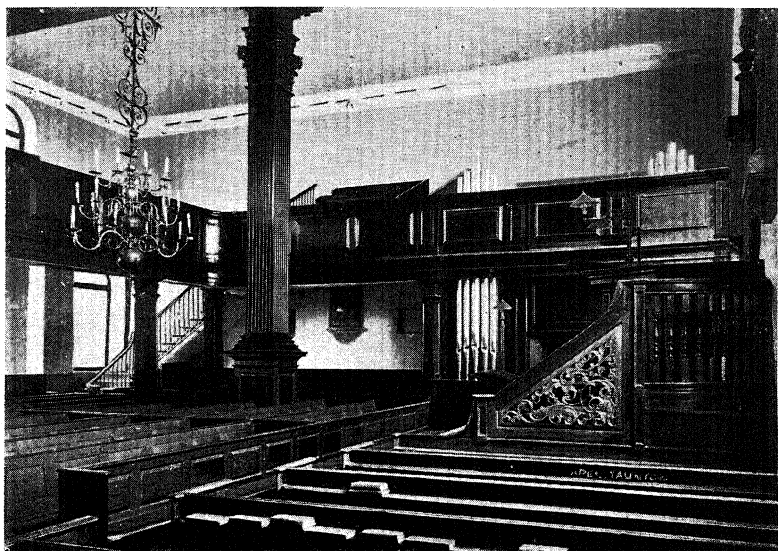
More often than not, they were erected at the sole charge or with the solid support of some rich man who desired quite sincerely to provide the worthiest possible setting for divine worship, and found that quality in an accurate modern rendering of the Gothic style favoured by the Establishment. More often than not, however, his own children, having developed social ambitions after a few years at an expensive boarding-school, forsook their parents' "chapel" on escaping from parental control, and migrated to the nearest Anglican "church", leaving the congregation with a heritage which proved costly to maintain. Admirable as many of these buildings are architecturally, they seem to me to fail as models for our rather grim future task, for three very cogent reasons: they are in no sense an expression of the spirit of Protestant Nonconformity, they do not meet our urgent practical needs in the simplest manner, and they are so expensive to build that the limited funds available will assuredly prohibit their use as prototypes. Incidentally, their very ecclesiastical appearance is considered by many acute critics to antagonize humble folk who associate their conventional features with social pretensions and a conservative outlook. Sometimes they suggest



VIa

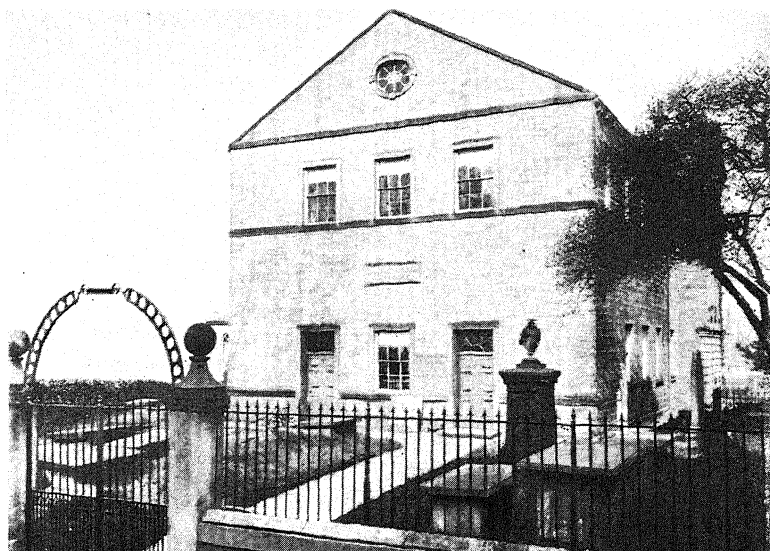
UNDERBANK UNITARIAN CHAPEL (FORMERLY PRESBYTERIAN),  
STANNINGTON, NEAR SHEFFIELD, 1742

See p. 35

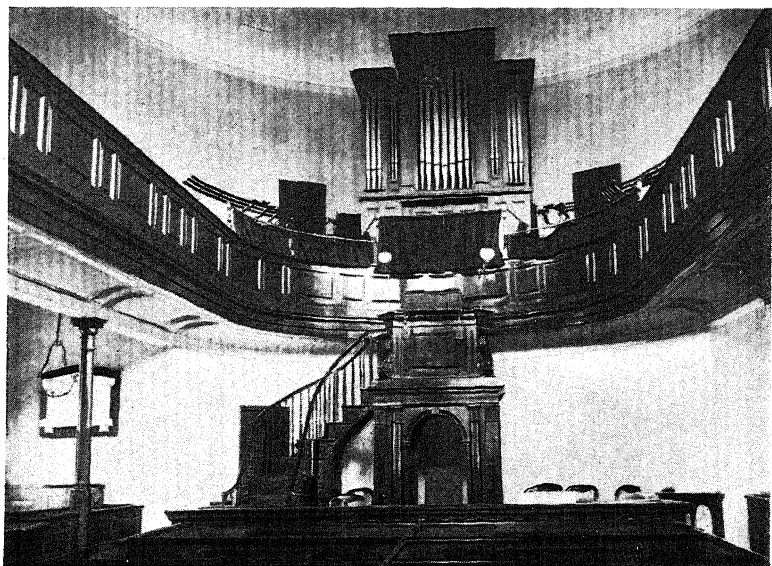


VIb

MARY STREET UNITARIAN CHAPEL (FORMERLY BAPTIST),  
TAUNTON, 1721



VIIa

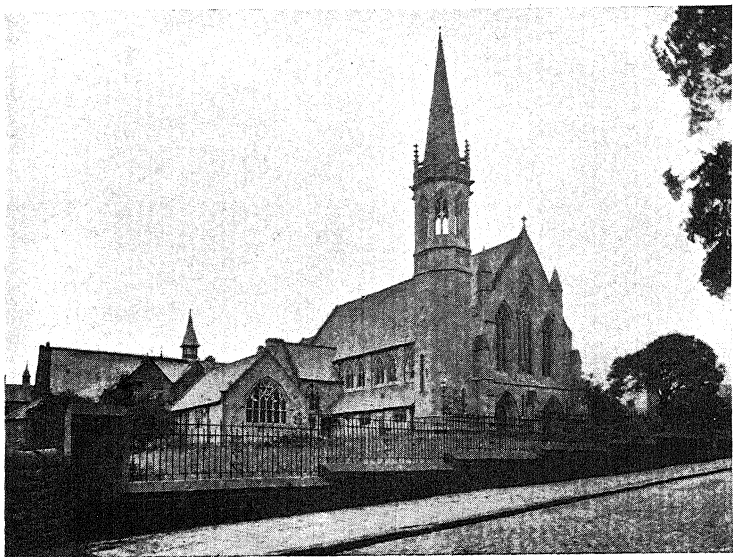


VIIIb

SALEM CONGREGATIONAL CHAPEL, OTLEY, 1825. TYPICAL OF ITS PERIOD

(a) Exterior; (b) Interior.





VIIIa

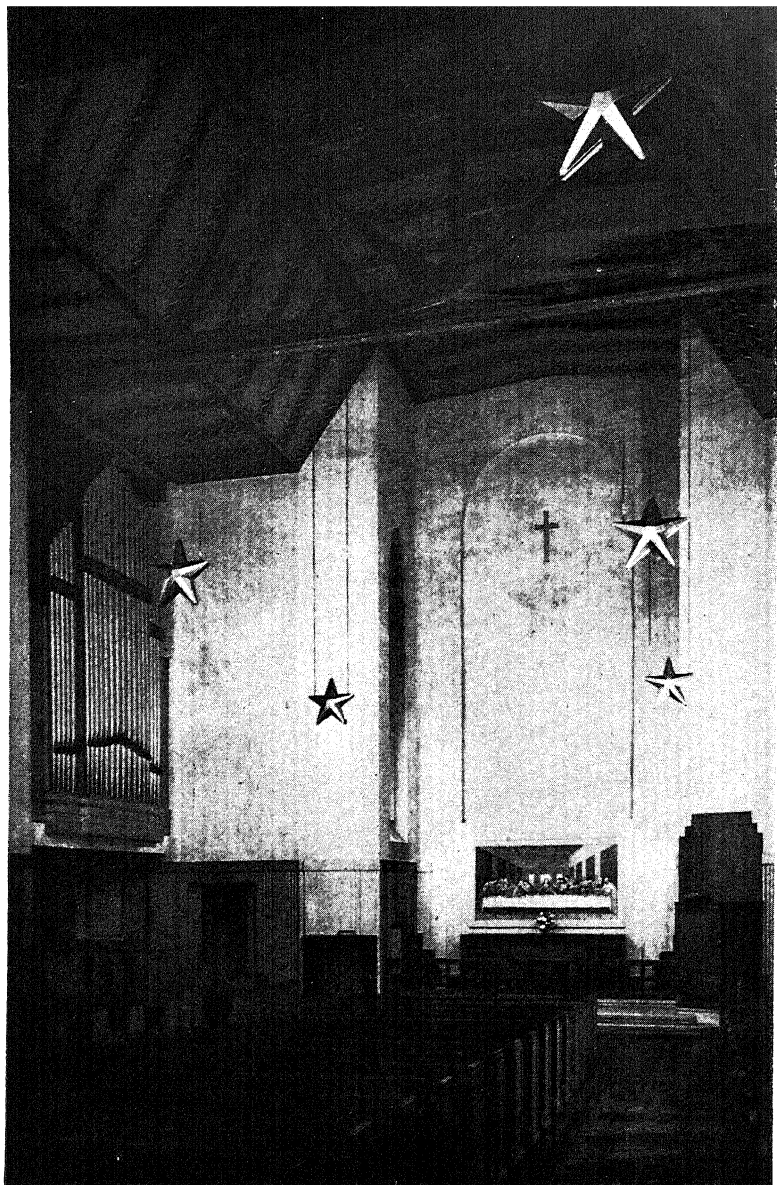


VIIIb

OTLEY CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AS REBUILT IN 1899

(a) Exterior; (b) Interior.

Architects: T. H. and F. Healey. Excellent design, craftsmanship and materials, but on orthodox Anglican lines.



## IX

THE "CLUBLAND" METHODIST CHURCH, WALWORTH, LONDON  
(DESTROYED BY ENEMY ACTION)  
Architect: Edward Maufe, A.R.A., F.R.I.B.A.

the "Rich Man's Darling" rather than the "House of Prayer".

There is a parallel case in the chapel of Mansfield College, Oxford (1889), where the architect has succeeded in reproducing the traditional late-Gothic style of many other collegiate buildings in that city. It is richly decorated with appropriate carving, and the materials are of the best, but there is no hint of the "Nonconformist Conscience" in its design. When the same architect was called upon to provide a chapel for Mill Hill School (with its strong Nonconformist tradition) in 1896, he adopted a Renaissance style which was perhaps more appropriate to Protestant Dissent; but, though the materials and workmanship were excellent, he does not appear at his happiest in the result. Very different in many ways is the charming if austere little chapel of Cheshunt College at Cambridge, designed by Mr. Morley Horder in 1915. This again has a late-Gothic or Tudor exterior, but the interior contains inlaid mahogany fittings—pulpit, lectern, and communion table—of Georgian type. The outstanding merits of this design are its extreme simplicity, and the skilful use made of colour: white walls, apple-green panelling, and mahogany fittings. The lighting is diffused. Mr. Morley Horder's "Little Church" adjoining the neo-Gothic Congregational chapel at Ealing is another case in point. Here too he has adopted extreme simplicity of design with a keen sense of colour effects. Both examples are admirable models for the post-war buildings of Nonconformist churches.

Between the extremes of the "auditorium" type of chapel, whether decked out with a medieval exterior or not, and the orthodox Anglican cruciform type, chapels of all shapes and sizes were built up to the outbreak of the first World War in 1914. Colour was often indiscriminately and lavishly used both within and without,

externally in polychrome bricks and tiles, internally in stencilled patterns and texts, in garish stained glass and in encaustic tiling. Some of the most costly Anglican pulpits of the Victorian period are hideous and vulgar beyond words, a crowded jumble of marble and carving. Much of the wall-decoration in both Anglican and Nonconformist churches could be justified by medieval precedents, for the coloured ornament in our ancient churches was far more crude and gaudy than is generally realized; but the effect, at any rate to our modern eyes, is the reverse of restful. The state of enlightened Free Church opinion on architectural style, at the close of the nineteenth century, may be gathered from an excellent book, *Churches, Schools and Mission Halls for Nonconformists*, published in 1901 and written by two Birmingham architects, Joseph Crouch and Edmund Butler. They still accept Gothic as the most appropriate style for all ecclesiastical buildings, but they are fully aware how easily it may be mishandled, and their views on practical questions are eminently sane.

During the brief interlude of twenty years between the end of the first World War and the beginning of the second, there was abundant evidence that the minds of architects as well as of church building committees were moving away from the medieval tradition which had enthralled so many of them for nearly a century. Among Anglicans and Roman Catholics, quite as much as among Nonconformists, an increasing tendency was discernible towards new forms of architectural expression. Ruskin's spell was broken, except in a few clerical and donnish backwaters. From Central Europe came novel ideas of ultra-modern design in reinforced concrete, applied to churches as well as to flats and factories and cinemas; and the concrete churches at Le Raincy near Paris (1923), at Basel (1926), and at Dortmund (1932)

were greeted with frantic enthusiasm by young students and older extremists among architects. Some of the wilder efforts in church-design abroad have to be seen to be believed. Advanced exponents of the new gospel eschewed ornament, national tradition, and everything that recalled the past. Their most articulate spokesman—"Le Corbusier" (a Swiss)—wrote of the house as "a machine for living in". In England, however, our conservative habit of thought is deep-rooted; and even for houses our people have been reluctant to adopt wholeheartedly the exotic fashions imported from Central Europe by refugee architects of cosmopolitan nationality, who obviously have no ties with our national tradition in building.

Still less has there been any frantic rush on our part to discard every feature which has been hallowed by past usage, in order to produce "machines for worshipping in". Certainly some churches erected between 1919 and 1939 strike a note of startling originality: among them such notable Anglican examples as the John Keble Church at Mill Hill (1936), St. Nicholas at Burnage near Manchester (1932), St. Saviour's at Eltham (1933), and St. Gabriel's at Blackburn (1933).

More often, however, the tendency has been to aim at simplicity in general design, common sense in acoustical planning, the omission of ornament, the sparing and discriminating use of colour in contrast with large expanses of white or cream internal walls, and the external use of honest brickwork instead of ludicrous parodies of Gothic masonry. The medieval cruciform plan is no longer followed universally, even by the Church of England, and most of the undesirable features—such as pretentious but tawdry spires—have gone with it. The most daring designs seem to have been produced by Anglicans and Roman Catholics, but worthy examples of Nonconformist churches erected during the

decade before 1939 (all of which are illustrated at the end of this book) are as follows:

Baptist: Sutton (Surrey).

Congregational: Oxted, Sanderstead (both in Surrey), Southbourne (Hants).

Methodist: Timperley (Cheshire), Banstead, East Grinstead, Pinner, Neasden.

"Free Churches": Perivale Park, Wembley Park.

To these must certainly be added the beautiful church (unfortunately destroyed during an air-raid) of the Methodist settlement known as "Clubland", in Walworth, London (Plate IX), designed by Mr. Edward Maufe, the architect of Guildford Cathedral. It is significant that all these churches, selected by me for their architectural merits rather than for the purpose of supporting any theory of design, have a great deal in common. They are all built of brickwork, and of brickwork admirably handled by their respective designers. Some of them are vaguely reminiscent of Gothic in their general appearance, but they have no tracery, and very little—if any—carved ornament. There is not a single spire among them, and only two have towers of any sort, one of them a low and sturdy tower of admirable proportions. For the most part the windows and doors have either round or square heads, pointed arches being the exception. The interiors are uniformly dignified, restful, and conducive to worship, with the minimum of decoration and the maximum of simplicity. In fact, they all comply fairly closely with my own ideas, as expressed in this little book, of the architecture appropriate to meet our future needs while preserving intact our Protestant and Puritan tradition. Thus I am not advocating some pet and personal theory, but am able to mention a number of buildings which show that many able architects, thinking independently, have arrived at the same conclusions as I have done. Finally, no intelligent person

could possibly maintain that any of these modest and modern Nonconformist sanctuaries, in spite of their lack of spires and tracery and carved ornament, look like anything but churches: it is all to the good that they are not merely feeble copies of medieval churches designed for the celebration of the Mass.

THE problem that now faces the various Nonconformist denominations is formidable in its magnitude and also complex in its nature. Money will doubtless be forthcoming on a large scale from the generosity of Free Churchmen, but it seems unlikely that any sums so obtained will allow of extravagant buildings and profuse decoration. To my mind, that is not necessarily detrimental, for a limitation of available resources may compel architects and the promoters of building schemes to consider afresh the special basic needs of Nonconformist architecture, and may convince them that some very austere and simple kind of building is a more appropriate expression of the Puritan spirit than much of the gimcrack Gothic of the Victorian period ever was. Thus we may make a virtue of necessity, not adopting outright for our present needs the plan of the early Georgian meeting-house, but using its simplicity to inspire our designs for to-day.

It seems to me that the architectural problem of external style is easily soluble, given a competent architect working under intelligent instructions. On the other hand, the "functional" problem (as it is commonly called nowadays) of planning the interior is far more difficult, and therefore should be considered first. Probably no reader of these pages would accept a definition of a church, even a "Dissenting chapel", as "a machine for worshipping in"; but perhaps one should attempt to apply a strictly functional test to our requirements if only to show how inconclusive such a test must necessarily be. We may assume that in any Nonconformist church the pulpit is the chief feature, the communion table almost equally important, and the organ and choir essential items, together with facilities for "solemnizing"



baptisms, weddings and funerals. Leaving aside, for the moment, the subsidiary rooms and halls which may form, and usually do form, a part of the whole complex of buildings and inevitably influence the size and shape of site required, we must begin by considering the size and shape of the "auditorium": that is, the main body or compartment of the church itself.

It is for the building committee to decide the number of seats to be provided, and for the architect to tell them how it is to be done. Their decision may influence his whole design, for if they instruct him to provide more than a certain number of seats, he can only do so by introducing galleries. The space required per head is prescribed, for Anglicans, by the requirements of the Incorporated Church Building Society as 20 inches in width and 3 feet from front to back. The width cannot safely be reduced, and the other measurement cannot be reduced below 2 feet 10 inches for reasonable comfort. These figures apply, of course, to adults; but it is usual to assume a wholly adult congregation in reckoning accommodation. Not more than 12 persons should be seated on any one bench or pew between aisles, and a bench of that length should be free from obstructions and open at both ends. The width of a central aisle should never be less than 4 feet, probably 5 feet, and a side aisle should be at least 3 feet wide. It will thus be seen that the size of seating-units is fairly definitely fixed, by experience or by rule, so that the total number to be provided inevitably determines the minimum size of the church (or of its "auditorium"), whatever shape may be adopted. In most districts, local bylaws prescribe the number and width of exits from a church in case of fire.

The next limiting factor is the maximum distance from which the preacher, in Nonconformist churches at any rate, can be heard. Prior to the recent introduction of microphones and amplifiers, it was usually assumed that

this distance was about 70 feet directly in front of the speaker: a rather larger allowance than Wren made in his letter already quoted (p. 30). Modern science has certainly increased that distance, but architects seem to have decided that, with a Gothic type of plan, it is impossible to accommodate more than about 600 persons on the ground floor (*i.e.*, excluding galleries). Even in the daring experimental plans already mentioned, for the King's Weigh House Chapel and for Lyndhurst Road Chapel (pp. 43-47), this figure was not substantially exceeded, though they were planned, on very un-Gothic lines, as places for preaching in. Moreover, the cost per seat for a large church without galleries considerably exceeds that of one with them, owing to the increased area to be enclosed by roofs and walls. On the other hand, if galleries are to be properly and architecturally treated as part of the design (as Wren did, *e.g.*, at St. James's, Piccadilly), they are by no means cheap; and the outstanding defect of most Victorian Gothic chapels is the use of galleries supported on anæmic iron columns decorated with cast-iron foliage, so bitterly derided by Ruskin. Galleries may be a heritage from the ancient meeting-house, where, as we have seen, they were generally used—presumably to save expense—but then their design was generally honest and therefore tolerable.

This brings us to the vital question whether any new Nonconformist church should be built nowadays with greater accommodation than 500 or 600 seats, all on the ground-level. (A small gallery to seat about 80 persons may easily be continued over the entrance vestibule; but, as I propose to suggest that as a possible position for the organ and choir, it may be ruled out for other purposes at the moment.) When churches were built for much larger congregations—"audiences" is perhaps the appropriate word—in late Victorian or Edwardian days, the reason was always to be found in

the magnetic personality of some popular preacher; but popular preachers, like the rest of mankind, are only mortal, and, after their passing, it does not follow that their successors will attract equally large crowds. Then one has also to reckon with the almost inevitable "deterioration" of districts as the prosperous people move outwards: this applies to the "down-town" church and to the suburban church. Some of the Nonconformist bodies draw the bulk of their adherents from the comfortable classes, who seem to move outwards with mathematical regularity and are not replaced in church by the poorer folk who inhabit the discarded middle-class houses now converted into tenements. One must face these facts, and it is doubtful whether any very large church should be built nowadays for any very popular preacher, except possibly in a case where the surrounding area has been scientifically laid out (*e.g.*, on the lines of Welwyn Garden City or the Hampstead Garden Suburb), so that the risk of "deterioration" becomes negligible.

If, however, this restriction be exercised, it leads to a somewhat awkward corollary. In order to prevent a community from being saddled with an incubus in the form of a large empty church, we correspondingly reduce the numbers—and therefore the financial resources—of the congregation who have to maintain the popular preacher. The Free Churches, lacking endowments and tithes, have to rely entirely upon the freewill offerings of the faithful for this purpose; and some of them (*e.g.*, the Congregationalists and Baptists) are organized in self-supporting units or congregations who cannot draw upon any central denominational fund. This defect has its origin in the distant days of Oliver Cromwell, when they were proud to be called "Independents"; but recent tendencies prove that central aid is almost essential when building a new church in a relatively poor area, such as a housing estate, even if it cannot be extended to the maintenance

of the ministry. The Church of England, in spite of all its inherited wealth, is now frankly if reluctantly realizing that there will have to be more "pooling" of its financial resources. Our final conclusion must be that the larger you build a new church for a popular preacher, the heavier the responsibility you bequeath to posterity; while the smaller you make it, the less the stipend you are able to offer him for his ministerial work. It is a thorny dilemma, and it is inescapable.

If one rules out galleries, it will be found that the rectangular area required to provide 500 seating-places each 20 inches by 3 feet, allowing for a central aisle of 5 feet and two side-aisles 3 feet 6 inches wide, amount to 63 feet by 52 feet. Assuming that the pulpit is placed, centrally or otherwise, at one end and the entrance at the other, and that there is no apse or chancel, one has to add to this space a clear depth of say 12 feet for pulpit, communion table and font; thus increasing the total length to say 75 feet plus the depth of the vestibule. These dimensions satisfy acoustic needs, but 52 feet is too great a width for a steep open timber roof without aisles, and presupposes a flat ceiling or a roof of rather low pitch. The John Keble (Anglican) Church at Mill Hill has a flat roof of this size, ingeniously constructed in reinforced concrete.

Theoretically, the most effective plan to accommodate an audience listening to a speaker, irrespective of organ-music, is the hemicycle or theatre type such as is adopted for academic lecture-rooms; but it is not usually considered appropriate for places of worship. Something rather like it may be seen at Lyndhurst Road Chapel already described (Figs. 13, 14); but in that case galleries form an integral feature. The same applies to the oval or amphitheatre plan adopted at the King's Weigh House Chapel (Figs. 11, 12), where the pulpit is at one end of the oval with the organ behind it. Neither

plan is likely to be followed nowadays for churches of moderate or small size: even the Greek-cross plan adopted at Christ Church, Westminster Bridge Road (Fig. 8), is not particularly appropriate to our purpose, and acoustically it is not very satisfactory. At West Hampstead Congregational Church (1895), the plan is an irregular octagon, with the pulpit on the central axis, and twin entrances—together with staircases up to the galleries—on the oblique sides of the octagon facing the preacher.

Another alternative is the cruciform plan with chancel and transepts, used in many of the larger churches (but *not* in most of the English parish churches) in the later Middle Ages: I have already explained at some length that the form of worship at the time when these churches were built was Roman Catholic, not Protestant, and was centred round the celebration of the Mass, not upon preaching. At that period, the only churches specifically designed for preaching were the "hall-churches" (as they are now called) used by the friars. The Dutch Church in Austin Friars in the City of London, gutted in an air-raid, is a fine fourteenth-century example. These buildings are oblong in form, without chancel or transepts, but the Dutch Church has aisles. They are acceptable acoustically for Protestant worship, *i.e.* preaching, because of their simple shape; whereas all projections such as transepts or chancel, all irregularities in roof-heights, and all stone vaults or domes reduce the acoustical efficiency of the building. It may reasonably be urged that shallow transepts do provide additional seating close to the pulpit, and thus allow a corresponding reduction to be made in the length or width of the "nave".

Nevertheless, the cruciform plan is to be discouraged for Nonconformists on strictly practical grounds: as to its sentimental associations, I may quote a passage from Professor Hamilton Thompson's excellent little book,

*The Ground Plan of the English Parish Church:* "Although the ground plan with nave, transepts and chancel forms a cross; and although, as time went on, the resemblance to the chief symbol of the Christian faith was no doubt recognized and valued, the plan itself, as we have shown, came into being from entirely natural causes."

If, however, the cruciform plan be adopted, presumably in conjunction with some modified form of Gothic architecture, then the side-aisles should be placed *outside* the arcade supporting the main walls and roof (as, *e.g.*, at Union Church, Mill Hill, and the Congregational Church at Otley, Yorks.). Thus it will become possible to use an open timber roof of reasonable span and steep pitch to comply with Gothic tradition. For Nonconformist worship, both transepts and chancel should be comparatively shallow. (A variety of modern church plans is given at the end of this book.)

The last alternative, and by far the most appropriate to our modern ideas and needs, is the simple oblong plan of the old meeting-house and of many of our oldest aisleless parish churches, with or without an apse or shallow chancel. This type is older than the Gothic cruciform plan, and may be traced to the Roman "basilica" form adopted by the primitive Christians for their first churches. In those ancient buildings, an apse is commonly found; but whereas, in the secular basilica, the *prætor* sat in the central seat of those which were ranged round the back of the apse with his assistants on either side of him and an altar on which oaths were sworn in front of him, in the early Christian churches the central seat was occupied by the "bishop" and the others by the assistant clergy. (Most of the Christian basilican churches had aisles, but it seems probable that the secular basilicas had not.) Nonconformists, especially Baptists and Congregationalists, like to claim that their form of worship is derived from the practice of primitive

Christianity; and it would certainly appear that their usual custom, up to recent times, of placing the preacher at or near the end of the church, behind the communion table which—for us—takes the place of the altar, had a precedent far more venerable than the Anglican Church can show. There is an interesting example in the cathedral at Torcello near Venice, built in the seventh century, but rebuilt on the original lines in 1008.

In the earliest Christian churches, a small movable reading-desk was used, known as an *ambo* (plural *ambones*), which is a Greek word signifying “a place to which one walks up”. Later, it became fixed. The oldest known example is in the basilica of San Clemente at Rome, originally built *c.* A.D. 300, but much altered in the twelfth century. As time elapsed, two *ambones* were often installed, one for the gospel and one for the epistle, and were made of costly marbles. But the single *ambo* continued to be used in some places, in “three-decker” form: the topmost stage being occupied for preaching by priests and deacons, while the bishop still preached from his throne in the apse.

The earliest documentary reference to a pulpit in England occurs in the twelfth century, and there are celebrated stone pulpits in the refectories at Beaulieu Abbey and at Chester, where monks used to read religious books to the brethren during meals; but the oldest surviving pulpit in an English parish church dates from *c.* 1330. The use of pulpits was uncommon in churches till the fifteenth century, and even then was probably limited to not more than one church in four; but in 1603 it was ordered that a pulpit should be installed in every parish church. A large number of English wooden pulpits survive from James I's reign, many of them being the work of skilled Flemish craftsmen. They are small in size, and are usually hexagonal or octagonal in plan. The normal position in a parish church was one bay

west of the east end of the nave. In Nonconformist meeting-houses of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as we have seen, the pulpit was placed centrally on one side of the "auditorium", often on the longer side, and was generally a lofty structure so that the minister could command, and be seen from, the galleries which were a normal feature. This brief historical excursus is included here to show that Nonconformists of to-day who prefer a central position for the pulpit are not departing from tradition, but are, in fact, following the earliest known practice.

On the other hand, we have to find a fitting position for the communion table; and if that is to be placed centrally too, obviously the pulpit must stand either behind it or in front of it. In the former position, if there is an apse or shallow chancel, the minister is somewhat separated from the congregation, and an impression of sacerdotal isolation is created; but, if there is no apse, he may feel that he occupies too conspicuous a position at the end of a vista, in a place where English Catholic tradition has led us to expect to see an altar and a reredos. An arrangement common in Nonconformist churches a century ago, when organs came into general use, was to place the organ centrally on the end wall with a lofty pulpit in front of it, and the communion table, in a space enclosed by rails, beneath and in front of the pulpit. One æsthetic drawback to this arrangement is that organ-pipes do not form an appropriate background to the central feature of the church: they inevitably produce a restless mass of confused lines and details in a position where the eye seeks a restful unbroken space conducive to meditation and worship. If we rule out that solution for æsthetic reasons, as I think we should, then a possible alternative is the provision of a pair of pulpits on the principle of the twin *ambones*, placed on either side of a recess or apse containing the communion table.



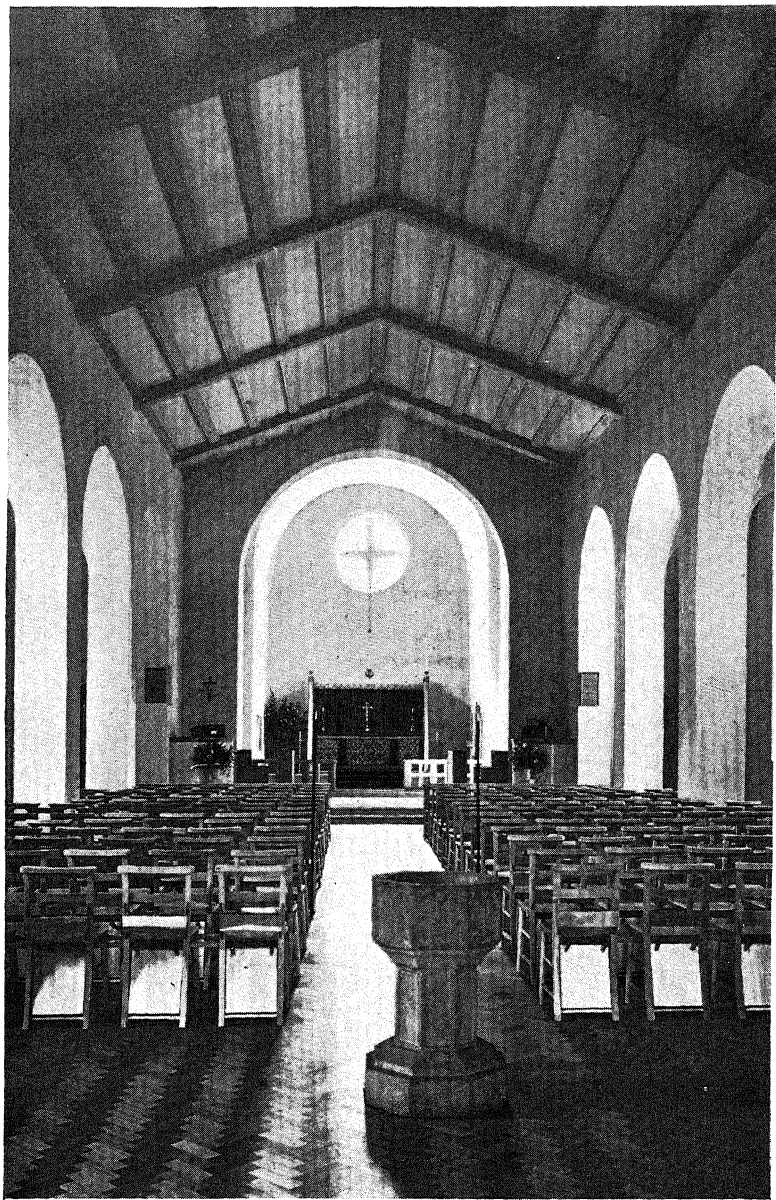
Such a method has been employed recently in three beautiful new Anglican churches: at Weston Green (Surrey, Plate X); at St. Gabriel's, Blackburn; at the John Keble Church, Mill Hill; and also at the Unitarian church at Ullet Road, Liverpool. If this solution be adopted, only one pulpit is occupied on normal occasions, the other coming into use where two ministers share the conduct of the service or where the lessons are read by a layman. As compared with the use of one pulpit plus a portable lectern, it has the merit of symmetry, lopsidedness being the defect of the normal Anglican arrangement of a single pulpit placed on the north side of the chancel arch.

In any case, Nonconformist ministers seems to prefer a roomy pulpit, but the height of its floor should not exceed 4 feet above the floor-level of the church. To obviate the difficulty created by the varying stature of ministers, the panelled sides should be fairly low, and an adjustable reading-desk for the Bible should be installed. A tubular light is required to illuminate the top of this desk only, and nowadays a microphone is usually provided, connected to acoustical appliances for deaf people in certain seats in the "auditorium". The designers of pulpits can find much inspiration in the work of Wren; and, if galleries can be eliminated, the pulpit need not be lofty (Plate XI).

The communion table is the other integral piece of furniture in any Nonconformist church, and must be clearly differentiated from the Catholic altar. The pagan origin of the altar is well known, and to many people its association with bloodthirsty and disgusting sacrificial rites in pre-Christian days is repellent; but the animosity shown towards altars during the Reformation seems to have arisen rather because of "Popish" practices, and especially because stone altars had become receptacles for relics of the saints, etc. If we hark back to the days

of primitive Christianity, we find no altar in use during the early centuries. The first communion services were based upon the Last Supper rather than upon the Stone of Sacrifice, and a movable wooden table was used. The idea of the stone reliquary altar is not met with anywhere before the fourth century, and it seems unlikely that stone altars were commonly used in England before the later Middle Ages. At about the same time, richly embroidered frontals and covers came into use. About 1550, orders were promulgated (by the Protestant Church of England, not by Nonconformists, who had then only just made their appearance) that all fixed altars should be destroyed and replaced by movable wooden tables. Not only were they made movable, but for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper they were actually moved from the chancel into the body of the church, and placed with their long sides towards the north and south, the ends thus facing east and west and the officiating clergyman standing on the north side. A somewhat similar practice was followed in certain of the old meeting-houses.

Once again I have included a short historical excursus, this time to show that the Nonconformist view of the communion table as a table and not as an altar is based upon the oldest traditions of Christianity, whereas the Catholic altar is a much more recent innovation. The table should be plain but comely in design, not flimsy or over-decorated; and no embroidered frontals or cloths should be allowed to mar its simple dignity. Some people, with long-acquired associations in their minds, expect to see a gilt or silver cross standing in its centre, but that is alien to the Protestant conception of the Lord's Table. Others like to see its bareness relieved by a tall vase of flowers: there is nothing "Popish" about beautiful flowers tastefully arranged, yet nothing specially stimulating to devotion by their presence in that position.

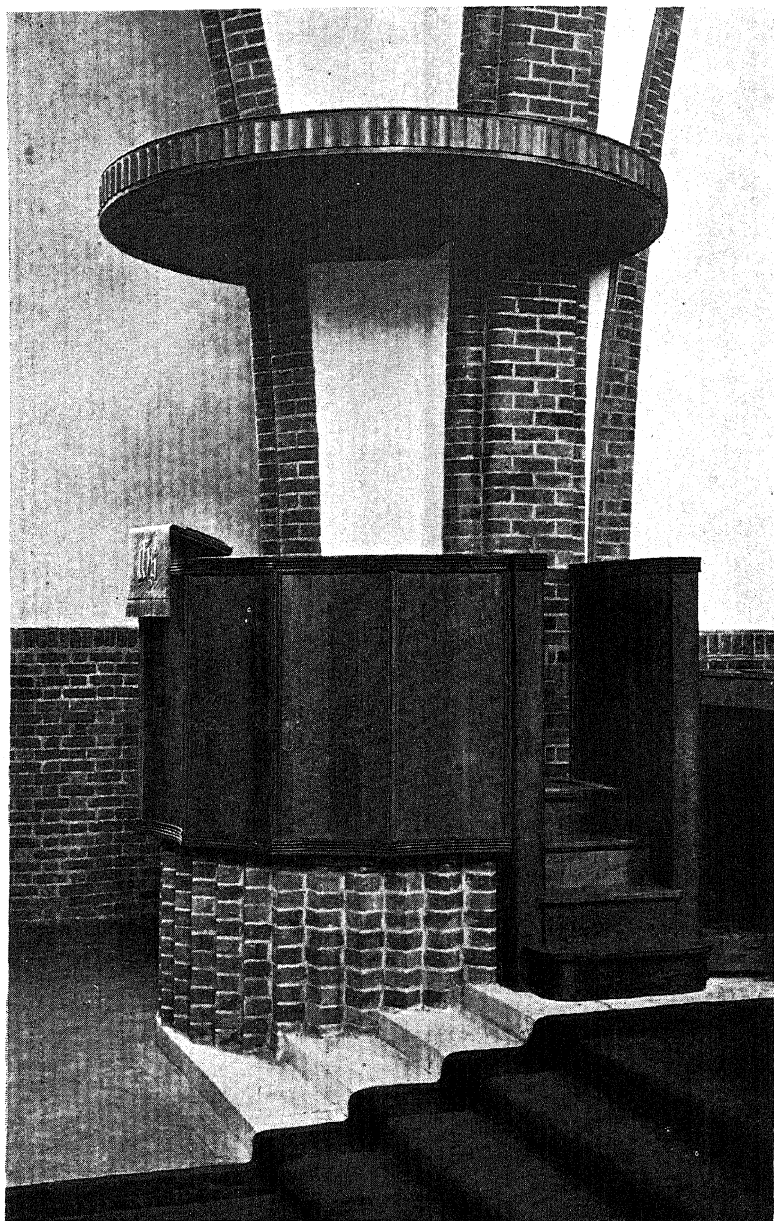


X

WESTON GREEN (ANGLICAN) CHURCH, SURREY

Interior showing twin pulpits or *ambones*.

Architect: Edward Maufe, A.R.A., F.R.I.B.A.



# XI

SUTTON BAPTIST CHURCH, SURREY: THE PULPIT

Architects: H. A. Welch and Felix J. Lander, F.F.R.I.B.A.

Some sort of a background seems to be expected behind the table, often in the form of a dark blue curtain, closing the axial line or central vista of the church. As I have already argued against the organ being placed there, it rests with the architect to devise some very simple architectural treatment (Plate XII); unless, indeed, the church authorities are prepared to share my ultra-Protestant view that a blank, light-coloured space is in itself restful, impressive, and suggestive of worship. In the charming chapel at "Clubland" in Walworth (Plate IX), a painting of the Last Supper occupied this position.

Dr. Drummond, in his book *The Church Architecture of Protestantism*, relates an astounding but amusing story of the gift of an extremely ornate and costly marble altar, by our late King in 1912, to the (Presbyterian) parish church of Crathie in Scotland. This royal indiscretion aroused a fierce protest in the Press by an irate Scottish peer: "It is sad to see our ministers bolstering up with contemptible snobbishness what Scotsmen have shed their blood to deliver us from. . . . The position they assumed amounted to this: Because his Majesty gave it, we do not object. What snobbery! What morality!"

The form of the communion table presents no difficulty; but its position certainly does, as already noted on p. 62. In our form of worship, the table is used at comparatively long intervals, normally once a fortnight or once a month, yet opinion seems to demand that it shall be permanently placed on the axial line of the church, in front of or behind the pulpit if the pulpit is central. If there are, as I hold, objections to either solution, the use of twin *ambones* or of a single side-pulpit seem to be the only remaining alternatives, short of placing the communion table in a special side-recess, and nobody has ever suggested that. In any case, the table should be raised two or three steps above the floor

of the church, and should have chairs (designed to harmonize with the table) standing behind it, for the minister and the deacons or elders. Methodists usually receive the communion kneeling in front of the table, as in the Church of England, so a low rail is needed, which also serves for weddings. The other Free Church denominations have the bread and wine brought to the congregation seated in the body of the church, by the deacons, so the rail is not so necessary. This difference in ritual practice also affects the disposition of the aisles and of the space in front of the table.

Dr. Drummond (p. 205) offers an ingenious suggestion: "From the Evangelical point of view, the best solution of the antithesis of pulpit and altar seems to be the retention of the central position of the pulpit, with a raised platform in front for the communion table, font, and seats for the minister and elders. Steps would lead from this platform to the floor of the nave, at the front of which should be, if possible, an open space, especially if there is no central aisle. Such conditions would facilitate the reverent administration of sacraments, marriages, etc."

Yet all these difficult problems of ritual planning would be simplified if it were not necessary to provide a place for organ and choir as well as for pulpit and communion table. No such difficulty arose in the earliest meeting-houses, and we have already seen that in Wesley's great chapel in London, the mother-church of Methodism, the tuning-fork gave place to the organ as late as 1882. I do not wish to propose here any return to primitive conditions. Choral singing has become one of the chief features of Nonconformist worship; it is often good, and sometimes very good indeed, as all listeners to B.B.C. programmes must realize by now. It is best when it is straight four-part congregational singing taken at a moderate pace, and worst when chants are gabbled, or hymns galloped, or when a voluntary choir attempts

anthems beyond its reach. Having been drilled in Bach's fugues in my youth, my own taste perhaps leans to severity and simplicity in church music, but all readers will agree that, for solid congregational singing, an organ provides the best lead, accompaniment, and background.

In the early days of Christianity, organs—which are known to have been used for other purposes before the second century B.C.—were banned from all churches because of their association with pagan rites and gladiatorial combats. However, like many other secular features, they were ultimately adopted; and it is recorded that Pepin of France obtained an organ from the Byzantine Emperor and installed it in a church at Compiègne in A.D. 757, when it was hailed as a remarkable innovation. Organs were in use in English churches by the tenth century, the keyboard appeared in the following century, and pedals in the fifteenth century, but were not adopted in England until modern times. Most of the existing church-organs were destroyed before the Restoration, presumably by the Puritans; but then came "Father Smith", the celebrated German organ-builder, who installed large instruments in some 45 English churches, many of which were designed by Wren. Of about 50 of Wren's City churches, however, less than half were furnished with organs. He invariably placed them in a western gallery over the vestibule: this is a point of some importance to which I shall return. Organs in Anglican and Roman Catholic churches designed during the Gothic Revival, as well as in some Nonconformist churches planned on similar lines,<sup>1</sup> were usually placed in organ-chambers north or south of the chancel; but in most of the cathedrals, and also notably in King's College Chapel at Cambridge, the organ is placed on the

<sup>1</sup> I have heard it stated that an organ was first installed in a Nonconformist church in 1801.

top of the screen at the entrance to the choir, a position which has much to commend it acoustically, though the vista along the building is spoiled thereby.

Yet the favourite situation in Nonconformist churches from early Victorian days up to recent times has been the end wall, behind the pulpit and the communion table, with the members of the choir arranged on either side of the minister, directly facing the congregation. Even in the Free Church at the Hampstead Garden Suburb, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens (1911), that arrangement has been adopted; but one can hardly believe that so great an artist followed it without some misgivings, for it is the worst possible background for a sanctuary. As previously remarked, the confused lines of the organ are restless and disturbing; but when to those elements one has to add a miscellaneous assortment of hats, clothes and faces in a voluntary mixed choir, the effect is still less restful. If some of the faces are pretty, the effect upon the congregation is certainly not devotional; if they are hideous, the result is no better. Even the introduction of black gowns and academic caps, of the type worn by Oxford "undergraduettes", affords only partial mitigation; and one is driven to the conclusion that the choir should be heard but not seen.

Acoustical experts agree unanimously that the best location for the organ is in a small and low gallery over the vestibule at the "west" end of the church; and æsthetically, too, this is the best position, out of sight. If the ceiling of the vestibule be no more than 7 feet high or so, the choir may be placed in the gallery at a reasonably low level above the heads of the congregation, and at this height should be able to lead and control the congregational singing. It is necessary, however, to provide a small staircase to the choir-gallery, leading upwards out of the vestibule. In any case, the organ should be located under the main roof of the church, not in a chamber of



reduced height enclosed to some extent by arches. One expert states that an organ in the former case is four times as effective as in the latter; and another observes that most organs are far too large and therefore needlessly expensive. (That is a point very important for us to-day.) At the Anglican "John Keble Church" at Mill Hill (1936), the organ is in the west gallery, but the console stands on the ground floor, almost in the middle of the church, and the choir is grouped round it, the general plan of the "auditorium" being nearly square. The general effect, however, seems to me to lack dignity. If, on the other hand, the choir occupies seats at the front of the church or in a chancel, as in the conventional Anglican plan, it should not face the congregation directly, for reasons already given. At Lyndhurst Road Chapel (Figs. 13, 14), where the organ stands behind the pulpit and communion table, the choir is placed obliquely and is under the organist's eye.

As for the design of the organ-case, it is not perhaps generally realized that a naked organ is a hideous collection of unsightly flues and tubes of various sizes, and that the neatly-graded rows of pipes that one sees are mere dummies. Wren's organ-cases are mostly very florid and richly carved; but their architectural lines are worth study, and their sober colouring is a model of reticence. For modern Nonconformist churches, something much less magnificent than Wren's designs is required: the essential thing is that the general style of the case should harmonize with the design of the church and should be dictated by the architect of the church. In the new Methodist church at Timperley, the organ pipes are concealed by a lattice or grille (Plate XVib).

Of church acoustics in general it may be repeated (cf. p. 59) that the ideal "auditorium" has no transepts, deep chancel, or other projections, and that its roof or ceiling is of uniform height from end to end. Vaults,

domes and barrel-ceilings of a certain curvature are all undesirable; the flat ceiling, with rounded or "coved" angles, is the best. Irregularities of the kind named produce echoes and other deformations of sound. Apart from such defects, there is the question of resonance, a quality which is not in itself a defect. During the last 40 years or so, great strides have been made in the science of architectural acoustics; and now every student, before graduating from a school of architecture, is required to work out an "acoustical diagram" for some imaginary auditorium which he has designed. This involves the calculation of the length of reverberation produced by music or speech from a selected point in the building, and then the correction of that figure to ideal conditions. The figure is affected not only by the relative hardness and smoothness and resonance of the walls, ceilings, floors, and other reflecting surfaces; but also by the absorbent capacity of carpets, hangings, cushions, the bodies and clothing of the audience, and even by open windows. If, by these calculations, the auditorium is found to be too resonant with an assumed audience of two-thirds of the maximum capacity, it becomes necessary to fix special sound-absorbing panels to the ceiling and parts of the walls, especially to the "west" wall opposite the pulpit, unless the organ be placed in a "west" gallery and thus break up a large blank surface. (The old-fashioned galleries had at least the merit of reducing excessive resonance.) The absorbent panels just mentioned can be so contrived that nobody but an expert will detect their presence. Sounding-boards over a pulpit are seldom needed to-day, but there is a well-designed modern example in the new Baptist Church at Sutton, Surrey (see Plate XI).

The last features of a Nonconformist church demanding specific mention here are the baptistery for total immersion used in the Baptist denomination, and the

font used by all other Nonconformists as well as by Anglicans and Roman Catholics. Baptism, like so many other rites of the Church, had a pagan and pre-Christian origin in ceremonies of initiation, sometimes involving the blood of animals. In the early days of Christianity, adult baptism and immersion seem to have preceded by some centuries the general introduction of aspersion (or sprinkling) and infant baptism, so that modern Baptists are justified in basing their practice upon the oldest traditions of the Christian faith. The enormous and magnificent baptisteries of Pisa and Florence were built for the ceremony of immersion at Easter and certain other festivals, when the bishop dealt with large numbers of catechumens who could not have been baptized in the space available in any church. By the ninth century, the separate baptistery had given way generally to the font within the church, and most or all of the surviving English fonts are subsequent to the tenth century. The Baptist sect had its origin early in the sixteenth century, and many of its pioneer votaries in England were executed in 1535-38. It rejected infant baptism as un-Scriptural, and adopted adult baptism as one of the essential items in its church practice.

The present minimum requirements for a baptistery are a waterproof tank not less than 7 feet by 4 feet, to which a flight of steps descends. The very modern example in the new Baptist Church at Sutton (Plate XIII) measures 7 feet 6 inches by 4 feet and is 3 feet  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep, approached by five steps. It is constructed of reinforced concrete lined with marble. The best position is in a shallow apse or chancel behind the communion table, and raised with it on a low platform above the general floor-level of the church; but the recess is not essential. In any case the baptistery calls for some sort of architectural treatment or background, in view of the importance attached to the rite. Subsidiary "changing-

rooms" must be provided out of sight, approached through corridors and doorways to right and left of the baptistery (see Fig. 17).

The use of the font for the baptism of infants by aspersion differs very little among the other Free Churches: sometimes the rite forms a public ceremony, at others it is almost domestic in its restriction to a small audience. In the Anglican Church the font is usually a stone structure standing just inside, and to the left of, the south doorway. In this position, the space occupied is equivalent to from 20 to 30 seats, and the ceremony is inevitably of a quasi-private character. In Nonconformist churches, where infant baptisms are often or usually performed in front of the congregation, the font is prominently located near the pulpit; but it then constitutes yet another feature disturbing the symmetry of the church, and for architectural dignity and simplicity it is preferable to use a small portable brass font, but a niche for this can be contrived in one of the pair of pulpits or *ambones* previously recommended as the ideal arrangement for Nonconformists.

We have now considered in some detail the "functional" requirements of the Nonconformist sanctuary of to-day, regarded as "a machine for worshipping in" (re-quoting Dr. Drummond's ironical parody of a popular modern architectural slogan). There are other functional requirements common to all churches, and not peculiar to Nonconformity, which will receive a brief mention later, but we now have to face the most impalpable and indefinable function of all—the capacity of the interior of the church to create in the minds of the congregation a devotional feeling. Such a feeling is so largely a matter of personal psychology, of individual taste and temperament, of heredity and of acquired associations—often conservative and irrational—that many readers may consider it presumptuous on my part,

or at least futile, to attempt to find any common basis for the guidance of building committees and architects. For example, many Nonconformists, especially perhaps among Methodists, favour a warm and cheerful atmosphere, but one finds that quality equally in a gipsy-palace; while others, including most Quakers, favour white walls and extreme austerity, qualities seen to perfection in a surgical operating-theatre! The only factor shared in common between these two extreme views is a dislike of the hyper-conventional and sacerdotal appearance of the Victorian Gothic church, the "Catholic" aspect in fact; yet even that aspect has its admirers within certain circles of Dissent. What a task it is to essay any sort of compromise or synthesis between such divergent opinions, yet it is the prime task of every architect called upon to design a new Nonconformist church!

A careful reader of the preceding pages will have realized that my constant theme has been the elimination of all restless, discordant, and unsymmetrical features in the ritual requirements of the auditorium: pulpit, communion table, organ, and font. The result should be a very simple and restful church, leading the average mind to worship instinctively because of the lack of distractions, whether such distractions be consciously apprehended or not. If members of the congregation, in such circumstances, are sensitive enough to analyze the cause of that feeling, they will rightly attribute it to a sense of simple beauty and order, most desirable attributes of Protestant worship. There must be no lack of harmony in any feature, and no suggestion of blatant decoration to make the auditorium resemble a cinema.

The question of colour is of prime importance. We are assured by archæological experts that medieval churches displayed a blaze of colour everywhere, even walls and ceilings being covered with gay and often garish

patterns in crude tints, while all the fittings of the church were richly carved, bright hangings abounded, and there was a plentiful use of stained glass. The Puritans were partially responsible for whitewashing the walls; but, in many famous churches of the Gothic Revival (*e.g.*, those designed by the architect Butterfield), the most crowded and over-ornamental interiors of medieval days were rivalled. Lack of funds will fortunately prevent any repetition of these ecclesiastical excesses in our new Non-conformist churches; and, as I have said before, that is all to the good. Even the florid interiors of Wren's "Protestant" City churches, embellished with carved cherubs, festoons of fruit, and other pagan features of the Renaissance, are useless to us as models. We need a more austere type of beauty.

One discerning writer on the subject, Mr. Ronald P. Jones, suggests that the colour-scheme should become progressively lighter from floor to ceiling: this is a novel but entirely rational theory, and is particularly helpful to us if we adopt the acoustical experts' recommendation of a flat or nearly flat ceiling. Then the dark Gothic open timber roof stands condemned and our task is simplified. The colour of the wooden seats, pulpit, organ-case and other fittings should be uniform throughout and they should not be too shiny. The treacle-coloured tint of varnished pitch-pine pews, so beloved of our Victorian ancestors, is too garish; and even some shades of "honey-coloured" oak, varnished, are a trifle blatant. Unstained or untreated wood is apt to show dirty finger-marks, and needs cleaning too frequently to be recommended, but a dull stain of brown or even bronze-green is effective, and wax-polishing or a "flat" varnish preserves the surface. Oak is, of course, a durable and attractive material, but there are other varieties of timber suitable for fittings, and the beauty of the interior depends much more upon their design than upon the

use of oak, which may often be considered prohibitively expensive. The walls and ceiling may be ivory-white or cream, not dark buff or other drab tints, and the sparing use of occasional bands and stencilled borders in gay primary colours at salient points, not indiscriminately, gives cheerful relief to an otherwise severe interior. Here, especially, good artistic judgment is required, for the question of cost hardly arises.

However skilfully the architect may have designed his church, the whole effect may be ruined, or at any rate marred, if incongruous elements are subsequently introduced by pious donors acting without his advice. A garish stained-glass window, a tawdry lectern, an inappropriate memorial-tablet, are accessories that are often allowed to disfigure a well-designed church interior; while a notice-board in "carpenter's Gothic" may spoil the external appearance. In the Church of England, although many grievous errors of this sort have been committed in the past, and although hideous tombstones are to be found in many churchyards, there has been an increasing tendency of late to limit "the parson's freehold" by requiring all alterations and additions to any church, inside or out, to be submitted to an expert diocesan committee and to be approved by them. The Methodist Church is so centrally administered that similar safeguards could easily be adopted, if indeed they do not operate already; but Congregationalists and Baptists have hitherto been so jealous of their independence that this highly desirable result might be difficult to achieve. Similar "interference" with the design of the building itself, by a central body, might be resented unless that central body were contributing to the cost; but some such step may eventually be taken. In America, central control, involving the employment of consultant architects, has been found beneficial in matters of taste as well as of construction and equipment, and the

standard of design has been greatly raised thereby.<sup>1</sup> It has to be admitted that some small congregations possess no members competent to express opinions upon architecture, and that their architects may be unimaginative men who have never troubled to ascertain the basic and specific requirements of a Nonconformist church.

The introduction of symbolism into design is mainly a matter of personal taste, but, generally speaking, is repugnant to the ultra-Protestant mind. This feeling is, however, by no means confined to Protestants or even to the Church at large. In a brilliant article by Sir Kenneth Clark, published at the moment when this page is being written, he speaks of "the naked materialism of the twentieth century", contrasting it with the past when "lessons were taught by allegories or fables". He observes that "the scientific spirit impoverished the image-making faculty by invalidating the emblem", notes "the collapse of the symbolizing mind", and says that "we have a decline in the image-making and image-reading power". After explaining that "ornament has disappeared from all the arts because it has disappeared from life", he pictures an architect asking himself: "Is this ornamental feature really necessary?"—and then, concluding that it is not, deleting it from his design. He does not consider that economy is the only reason, or that the prevailing lack of demand for ornamental features is merely a temporary reaction from over-ornamentation a generation ago, but attributes the change to a much deeper cause: in fact, a purely utilitarian view of life. Yet even Nonconformists recognize the Cross as a unique and universal symbol, while they retain the obviously symbolical ceremonies of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Their distaste for such symbols as sacred monograms, the

<sup>1</sup> For full particulars, see Dr. Drummond's *Church Architecture of Protestantism*, pp. 108-111.



emblems of the Evangelists and so on, is probably due to the over-emphasis attached to all forms of "Popish" imagery at the time when Protestantism was born, four or five hundred years ago. Some symbols and emblems make a very obscure appeal, but the most remarkable example known to me occurs in the four playing-card symbols—diamond, heart, spade and club—carved on the four internal angles of the fine late-Gothic parish church (St. Sampson's) at Cricklade. What exactly is the religious message that they convey?

The number of people to whom symbolism and imagery make any appeal may be decreasing annually, though there are no definite grounds for the assumption. Nevertheless, this fact, if fact it be, does not imply a materialistic outlook. The whole question is treated in Dr. Drummond's book already cited where he preserves a sympathetic attitude towards symbolism in architecture. On his p. 292 he makes the suggestion, surprising yet not novel, that stained glass windows in our churches might picture famous scenes and personages from our history, such as the landing of the Pilgrim Fathers, and portraits of Bunyan, Milton and John Wesley. This has already been done in some churches, and it only remains to add that if it is to be done at all it must be very well done: only the best art and craftsmanship is permissible in decorating a church.

The lighting of a church has a considerable effect upon its devotional aspect. The craving for "dim religious light", voiced by our most renowned Nonconformist poet, is no longer felt: daylight should be ample enough to make the "auditorium" cheerful, and to enable the congregation to read the usually minute print of their hymn-books. A large window at the "west" (entrance) end often admits noises of traffic from a street outside, so may have to be made double. A large window at the "east" end, facing the congregation, may be found

dazzling at morning service, so is often omitted. On the other hand, it may constitute an attractive central feature, and the temporary glare of the sun may be mitigated by the use of certain qualities of glass. The science of artificial lighting has been enormously advanced during recent years, and to-day "indirect" or "reflected" lighting is generally used in churches, but here again the distressingly small print of hymn-books must not be forgotten. Means must be provided for dimming the lights during the sermon; and on no account must theatricality be suggested by a "spot-light" focused upon the minister or the Lord's Table. The matter of heating the church calls for no comment here: it is a purely technical matter, and the principles involved differ in no way from those applicable to the heating of an assembly hall.

As for seating, the abolition of the pew seems to have become universal in modern Nonconformist churches, to the benefit of everybody except, perhaps, the church treasurer, who in times past could rely at least upon his "pew-rents", but now has to depend upon freewill offerings plus guaranteed subscriptions. Yet the Victorian pew which I remember so well in childhood, with its cushions and its carefully latched door, did suggest exclusiveness; and probably the modern open benches, free to all and sundry, are far more attractive to people in general. Only once in my life, at a Roman Catholic church in Mayfair, have I had to buy a ticket for the use of a seat in a place of worship! Fixed benches are now being superseded in many new churches by collapsible or folding chairs in groups of four or six, allowing the whole floor to be easily swept and polished. The cleaning of the floors inside old-fashioned pews must have been a laborious business, and the moving of individual chairs entails a great deal of work. Whatever type of seating be adopted—even if it be obtained in standardized units

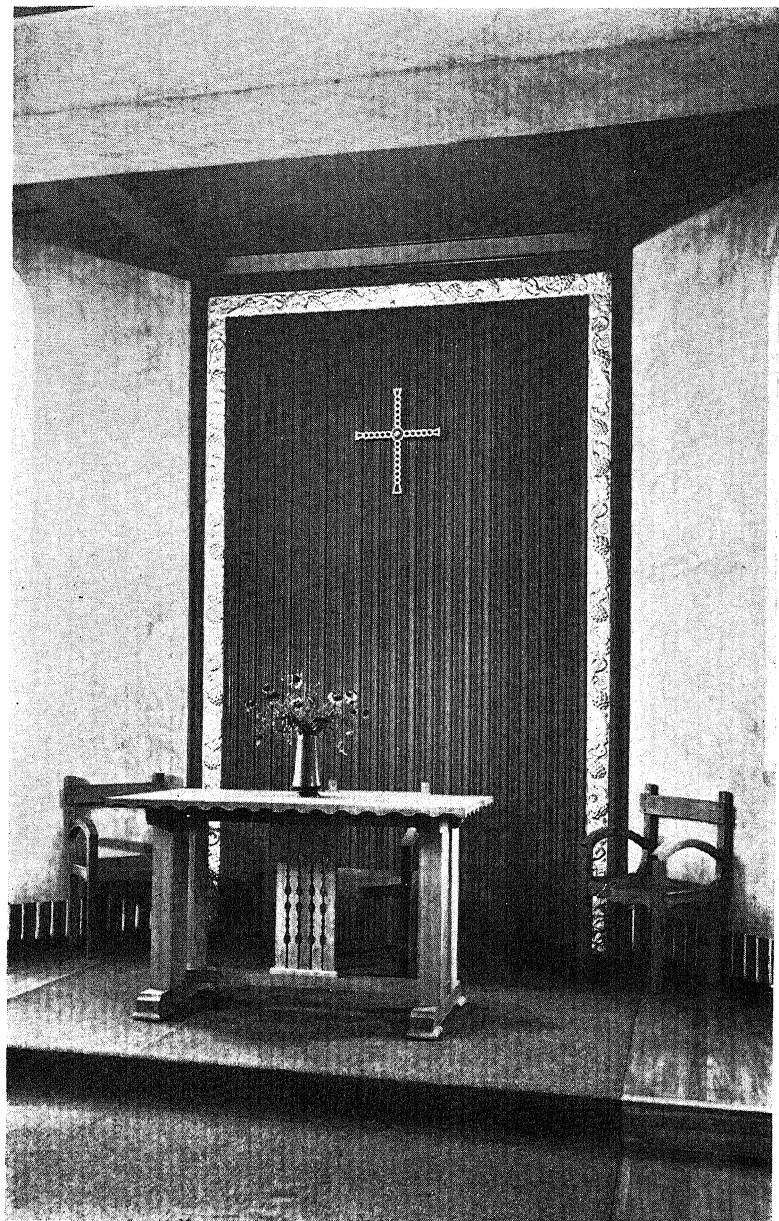
from a manufacturer—the architect of the church should have a voice in its selection, so that its design may harmonize with the general character of the building. The same caution applies to hymn-boards and other incidental furnishings.

Hitherto, little or nothing has been said in this book about the exterior of the church, but the general principles advocated for the design of the interior or “auditorium” may also be applied to the outside of the building. The present need for reducing expense, inevitable under prevailing conditions of financial stringency, actually favours the “Puritan tradition” of the modest brick-built meeting-house as against the mock-medieval Victorian chapel with its soaring stone spire. As I have noted previously, some of those spires were well designed and well built: moreover, they symbolized spiritual aspiration in theory, though too often social aspiration in fact. In New England, where Congregationalism established itself as the State Church—more or less—three centuries ago, the outstanding building in nearly every township is the sober Congregational church with its picturesque white spire in the style of Wren. It cannot be denied that towers and spires do give dignity to a church, that for most people they make it “look like a church”, and that they have come to denote “a finger pointing heavenwards”; but they are not essential to a successful design—a small turret at the most may meet the case—and it is much better to omit a tower than to provide a tower which is manifestly cheap and nasty, or which may saddle a poor congregation with a debt for many years. For the rest, the design of the exterior of the church is a matter upon which a competent architect needs no advice from me.

All through the preceding pages I have confined myself to the church itself, the “sanctuary” or “audi-

torium" if you like, and have said nothing of the complex of buildings of which it usually forms a part. The functional requirements of vestries and Sunday-school classrooms are so well known that they present no problems to building committees or to architects, though the subsidiary rooms (really "changing-rooms") required in Baptist churches where total immersion is practised do involve special consideration. Wherever funds permit, the sanctuary should be reserved for religious services and open for private prayer; while all secular or even semi-secular activities should be conducted in an adjoining assembly-hall. Only too frequently, Nonconformist churches have been used for political meetings, and unseemly bursts of applause have disturbed their peace. Somehow, the interior of the City Temple in London always suggested the atmosphere of a public meeting, and I remember witnessing noisy scenes there in or about 1912, when Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister, was interrupted by the "suffragettes".

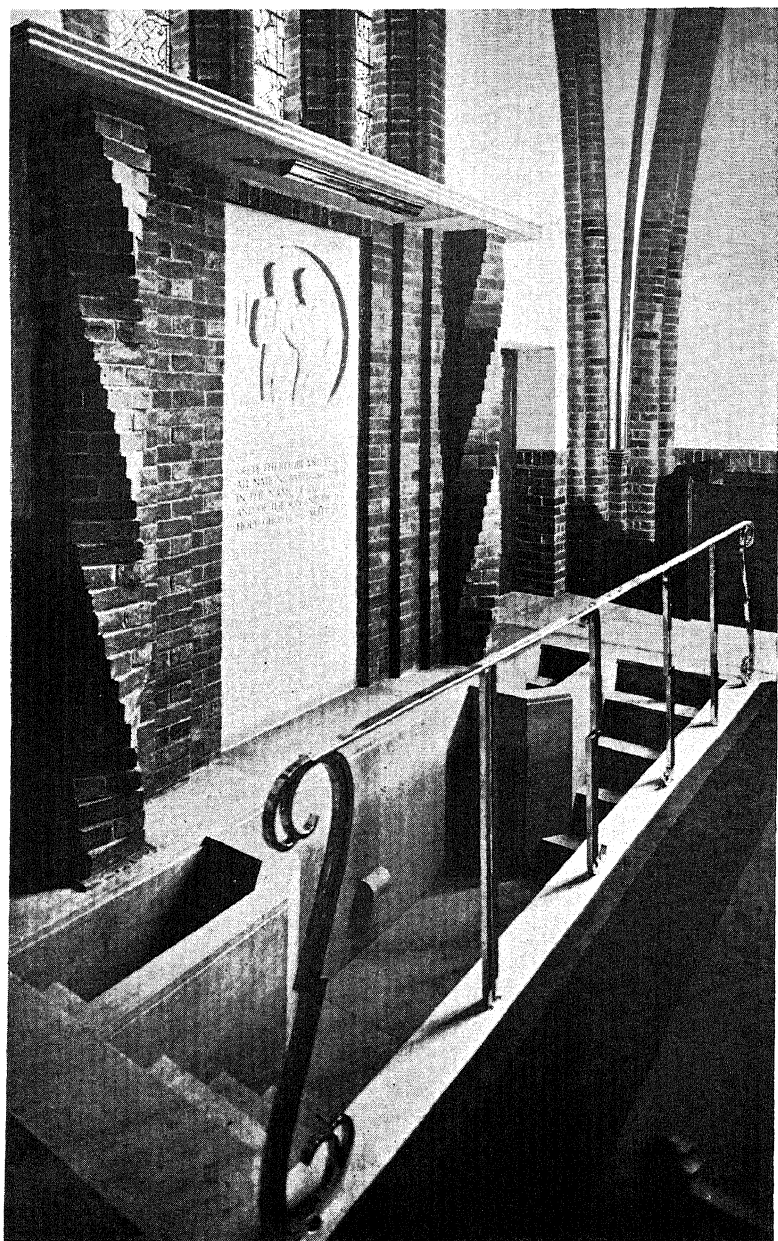
At the present moment, however, a very different problem arises, especially where a new Nonconformist church is projected on some housing estate, and it is desired to include a large measure of social work there, approaching the functions of a "community centre". In such a case, the congregation itself usually consists of comparatively poor people, and funds from a central denominational source are not always available, or are limited. Sometimes it is found impossible to provide an assembly-hall as well as a church; sometimes one building is erected with the intention of adding the other at a later date. Assuming that it is the proper function of a Church to provide relaxation such as table-tennis, billiards, badminton or dancing (and that is not a matter upon which I presume to offer an opinion), and assuming also that such functions cannot be provided in the projected municipal "community centres" for some years



## XII

PERIVALE PARK FREE CHURCH: COMMUNION TABLE, ETC.

Architect: John P. Blake, F.R.I.B.A.



### XIII

SUTTON BAPTIST CHURCH, SURREY: THE BAPTISTERY

to come, how are the dual functions of worship and recreation to be reconciled within four walls? One ingenious solution (see Plate XIV and Fig. 19) is to divide the church into three sections. At one end is the chancel or sanctuary, containing the communion table and—perhaps—the pulpit, organ and font. This is shut off from the “auditorium” by a curtain or a folding partition, and is only used for religious services. At the opposite end is another recess or space used as a stage and for other purely secular and recreational purposes: this is shut off in a similar way during religious services. The intervening space or “auditorium” constituting the body of the church is used for both religious and secular purposes, movable chairs being provided and the floor being marked out as a badminton court! As to the propriety or expediency of such an arrangement I offer no opinion here: it is enough to mention it as a solution which has been adopted. (Besides the example at Perivale, there is another in Eversfield Gardens, Mill Hill, designed by the same architect.)

Another ingenious proposal was advocated in *The Builder* magazine (December 5, 1941) by Mr. H. V. Molesworth Roberts: this was of a very different nature, but applied equally to newly laid-out garden suburbs and housing estates where hitherto it has usually been considered sufficient to reserve a site here and there for churches of the various denominations. At the Hampstead Garden Suburb, as we have seen (p. 47), the fecund imagination of Canon and Dame Henrietta Barnett went a stage further in placing the Anglican and Free churches on either side of a central campus, with the undenominational Institute closing the group on the north. Mr. Roberts ascribes to the late Canon H. R. L. Sheppard the idea, which he develops in illustrations, of a group of three churches round a garden open on the fourth side. He argues that the largest church, in the centre, should

serve the predominant religious community in the area, normally the Church of England, but that it should be used for all united services, and should be occupied by the Free Churches should they constitute the predominant element! One of the two flanking churches should be Roman Catholic, the other Nonconformist or Anglican according to the "majority decision" just described. Behind these two smaller churches would be the vicarage, the presbytery, the manse, and a hall which would serve both for the Society of Friends and for all other purposes required by any of the three major religious communities. The idea may seem Utopian, and perhaps it unduly strains Christian brotherhood as at present practised, but architecturally it is notable because it provides a dignified and harmonious group instead of three or four isolated buildings. Sir Giles Scott's recently published designs for the new cathedral at Coventry include a somewhat similar idea. There is not only a chapel for the joint use of the Anglican and Free Churches, but also a block of buildings where social work for the community as a whole may be carried on by Christians of all denominations.

Last among the innovations which seem to me worthy of our attention is a proposal made by Dr. Drummond that theological colleges should in future require their students to include some study of architecture in its relation to worship. This, he says (p. 105) is already done in some universities and Congregationalist seminaries in America, "while, in the Free Churches of England and in the Church of Scotland, any interest shown in church architecture is apt to be confined to a few individuals whose 'Catholic' leanings crave the accompaniment of 'Catholic' trappings". There is the rub: if our ministers are to study architecture at all, such study must *not* be confined to Catholic churches erected in the Middle



Ages. That particular aspect should not be overlooked, of course, but a Nonconformist student should pay equal attention to the basilicas of the primitive Christians, to the experiments made in Germany by the first Protestants, to our own meeting-houses of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, to their contemporaries in New England, to Wren's "Protestant" City churches of the same period, to the Gothic Revival in England (for which Sir Kenneth Clark's book provides a scholarly and readable manual), and especially to recent churches—Anglican as well as Nonconformist—erected between 1919 and 1939 (see pp. 51 and 52 in this book). Dr. Drummond's *Church Architecture of Protestantism* forms an excellent textbook for the whole course. The obvious advantage of such a study is that a minister so equipped would be able to furnish an architect selected to design a new church with a definite and intelligent idea of the requirements, something more precise than the number of sittings to be provided; and thus the architect, possibly obsessed with the notion that conventional "respectability" was the sole aim of the congregation and that—above all—the building must "look like a church" (*i.e.*, like a medieval church built around the Mass), might be stimulated to devise a really appropriate and modern sanctuary. In that task, the various suggestions made in the preceding pages of this book might conceivably help him.

All those suggestions apply primarily to new buildings, but the problem of repairing and remodelling a large number of bombed churches remains. Some of these will doubtless require complete demolition and replacement by new churches; others will be demolished and never rebuilt. Most, however, have been "gutted": that is, they are roofless and only the bare walls survive. Where, for reasons of sentiment or economy, it is decided to

remodel them, it should be possible to refashion them "nearer to the heart's desire" as easily as an old-fashioned theatre, restaurant, or concert-hall is brought up to date. Galleries may be judged redundant in these days of reduced congregations, other fittings will almost certainly have to be completely renewed. The position of a new organ, pulpit, font and communion table can be settled on merits in each case. Finally, the destruction of carved and painted decorative features will permit of the elimination of all superfluous trappings, the design of an austere new colour-scheme, and—in general—the reshaping of the church in the simple beauty that should be the characteristic of our Puritan architecture in the "Brave New World".

## BOOKS FOR FURTHER READING

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- Drummond, Rev. Dr. A. L. *The Church Architecture of Protestantism*. 1934.
- Drummond, Rev. Dr. A. L. *The English Meeting-House* (in *R.I.B.A. Journal*). 1938.
- Drummond, Rev. Dr. A. L. *A Century of Chapel Architecture* (in *Congregational Quarterly*). 1942.
- Jones, Ronald P. *Nonconformist Church Architecture*. 1914.
- Muthesius, H. *Die neuere kirchliche Baukunst in England* (pp. 121-157). 1901.

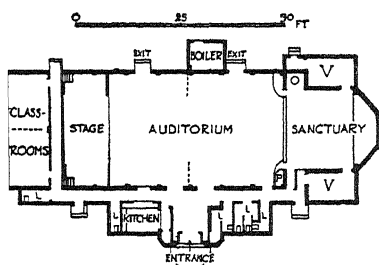


FIG. 15.—FREE CHURCH, PERIVALE PARK, MIDDLESEX.

*Architect:* John P. Blake, F.R.I.B.A.  
(See Plates I, XII, XIV, XV.)

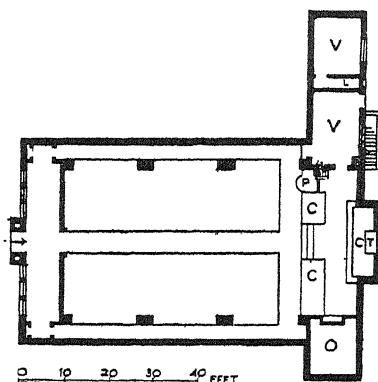


FIG. 16.—METHODIST CHURCH, TIMPERLEY, CHESHIRE.

*Architects:* Chippindale and Needham,  
A.A.R.I.B.A. (See Plate XVI.)

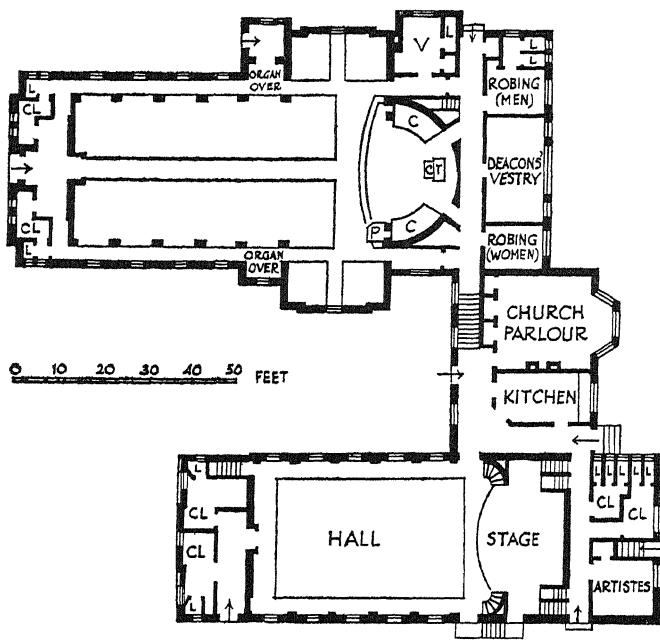


FIG. 17.—CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, SANDERSTEAD, SURREY.

*Architects:* Smee and Houchin, F.R.I.B.A. (See Plate XVIIIa.)

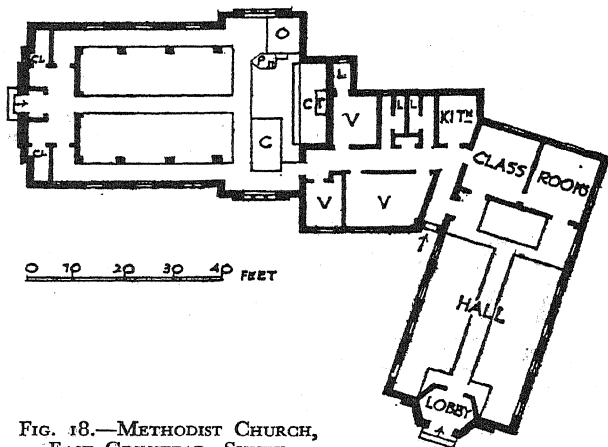


FIG. 18.—METHODIST CHURCH,  
EAST GRINSTEAD, SUSSEX.  
*Architects:* Smee and Houchin, FF.R.I.B.A. (See Plates XVIIIb, XIXa.)

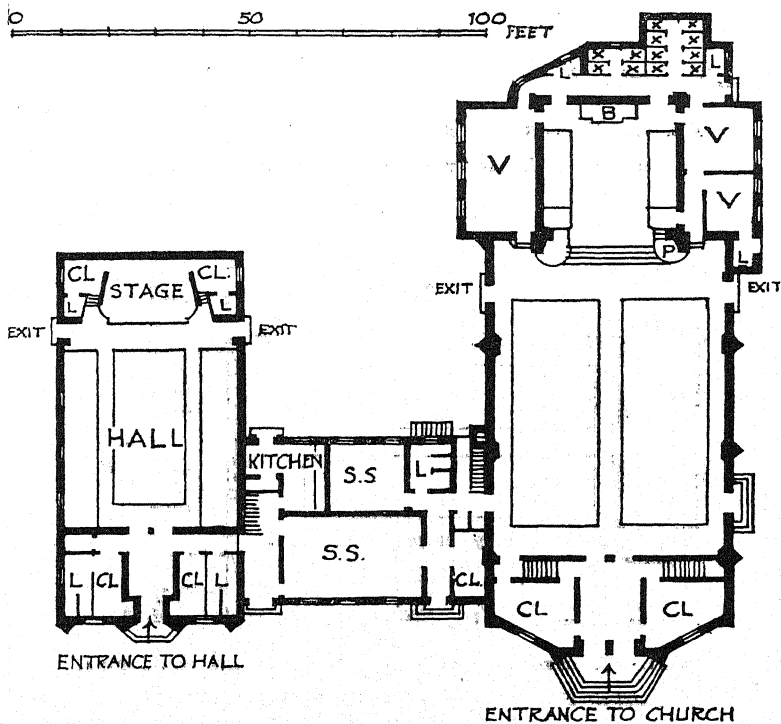


FIG. 19.—BAPTIST CHURCH, SUTTON, SURREY.  
*Architects:* Welch and Lander, FF.R.I.B.A. (See Plates XI, XIII, XVb.)

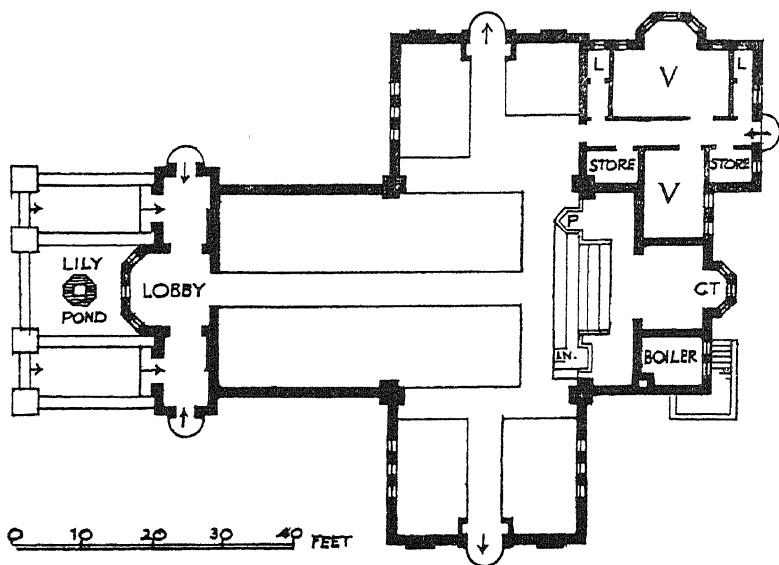


FIG. 20.—CHURCH OF THE PEACE OF GOD, OXTED, SURREY.

*Architect:* F. W. Lawrence, F.R.I.B.A. (See Plate XX.)

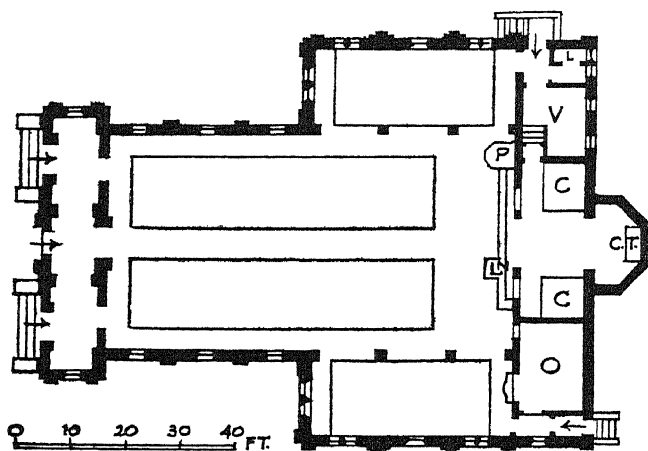


FIG. 21.—CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, SOUTHBOURNE, HAMPSHIRE.

*Architect:* F. W. Lawrence, F.R.I.B.A. (See Plate XXI.)

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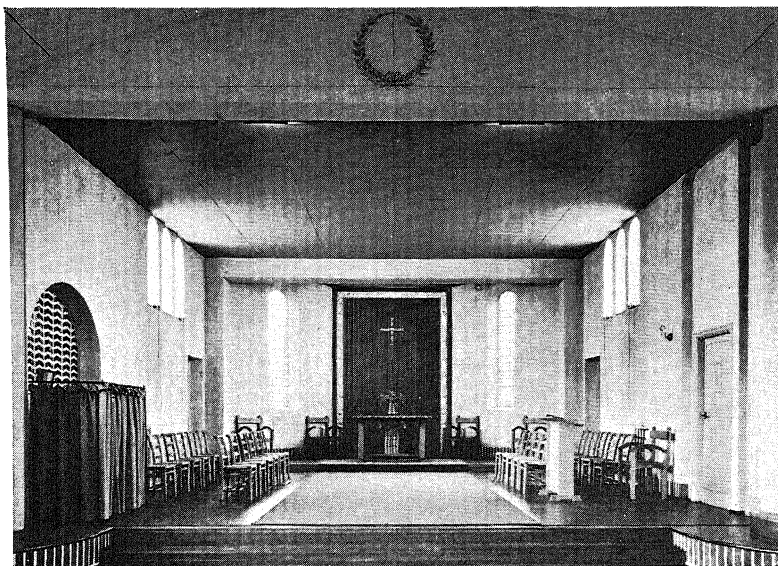


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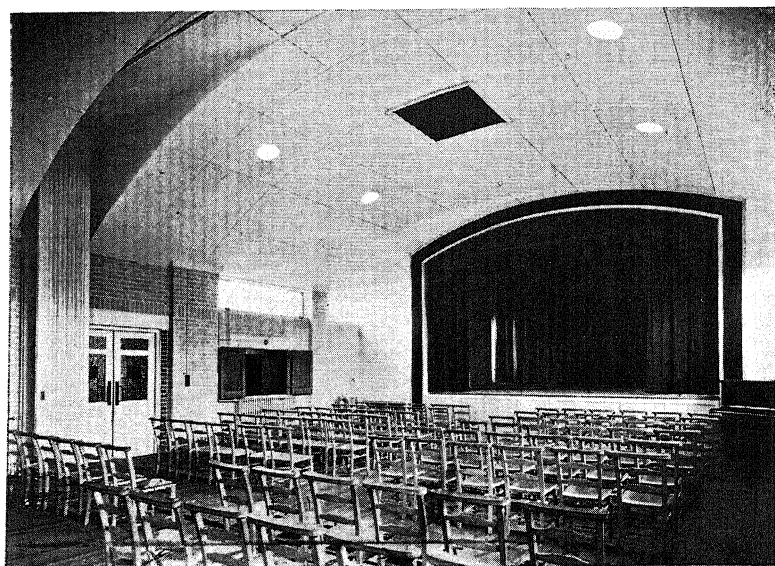
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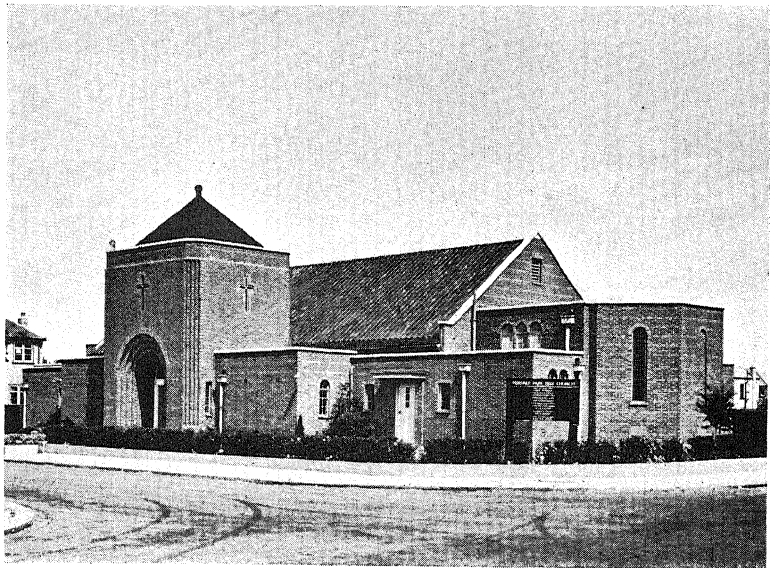
XIVa



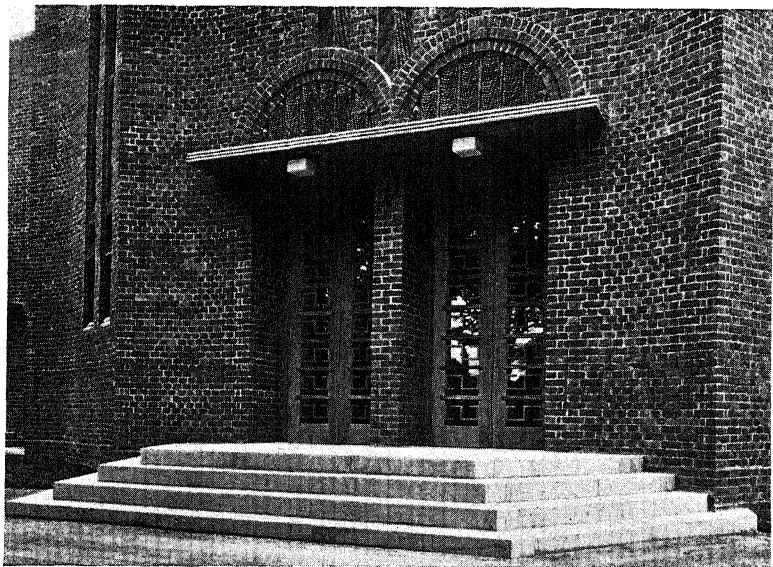
XIVb

PERIVALE PARK FREE CHURCH

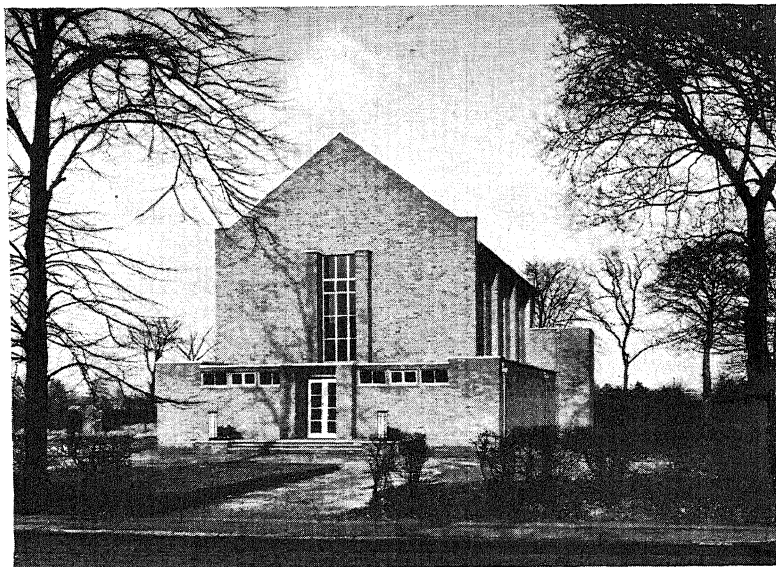
(a) Interior looking towards Communion Table; (b) Interior looking towards Stage.



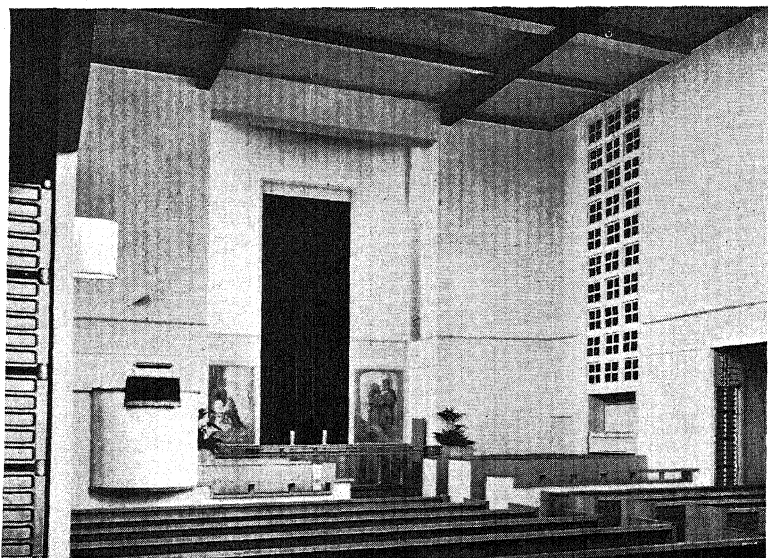
*XV<sub>a</sub>*  
PERIVALE PARK FREE CHURCH: EXTERIOR



*XV<sub>b</sub>*  
SUTTON BAPTIST CHURCH: DETAIL OF ENTRANCE



XVIa

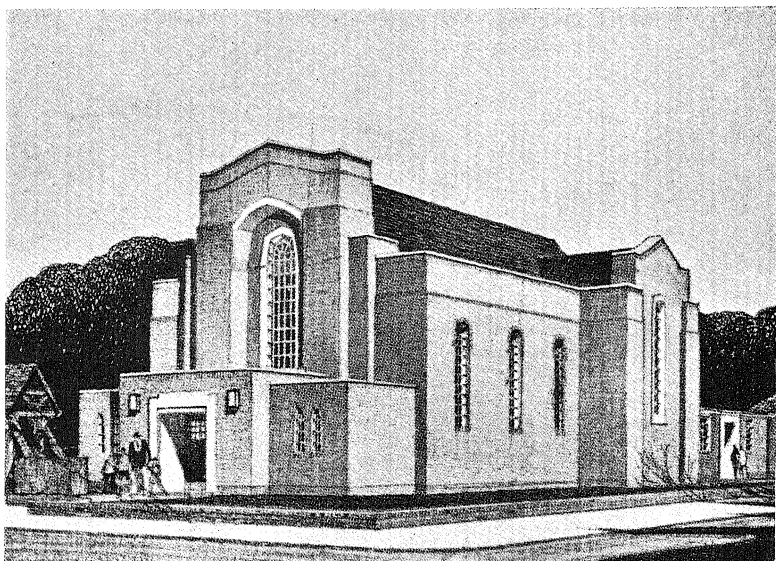


XVIb

METHODIST CHURCH, TIMPERLEY, CHESHIRE

(a) Exterior; (b) Interior.

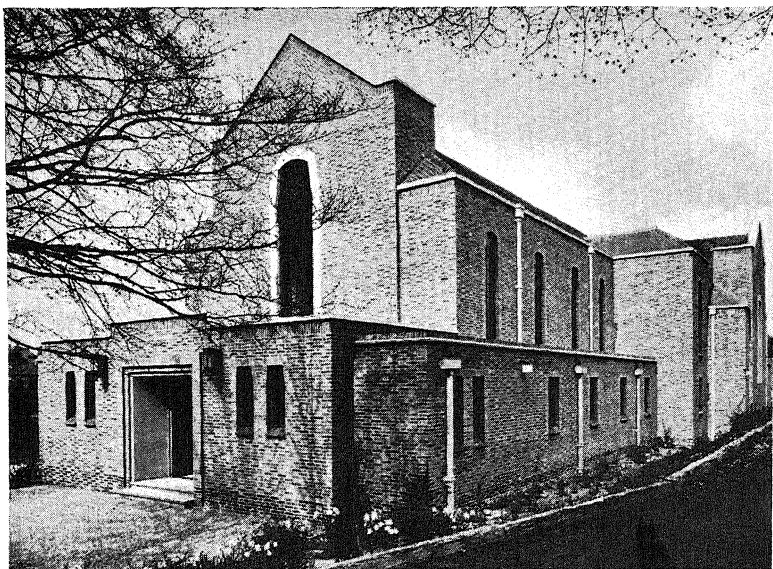
Architects: F. Chippindale and J. Needham, A.A.R.I.B.A.



XVIIa  
WEMBLEY PARK FREE CHURCH

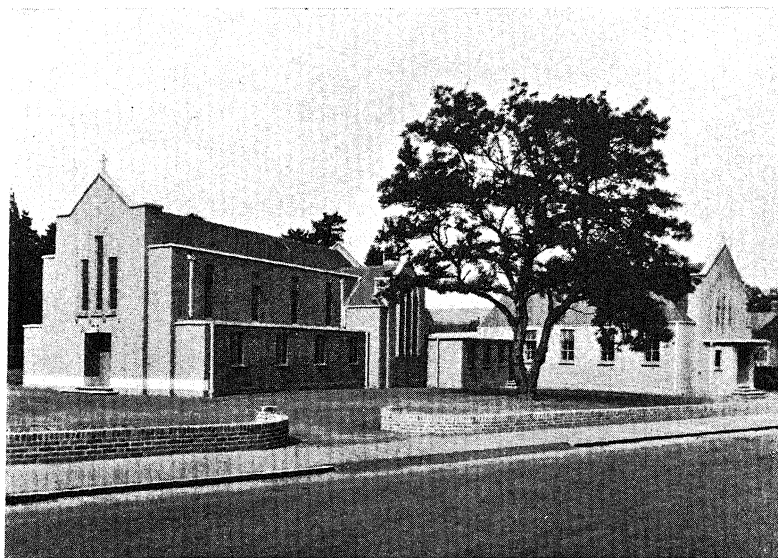


XVIIb  
PINNER METHODIST CHURCH  
Architects: Smee and Houchin, F.F.R.I.B.A. (also for XVIIa)



XVIIIa

SANDERSTEAD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

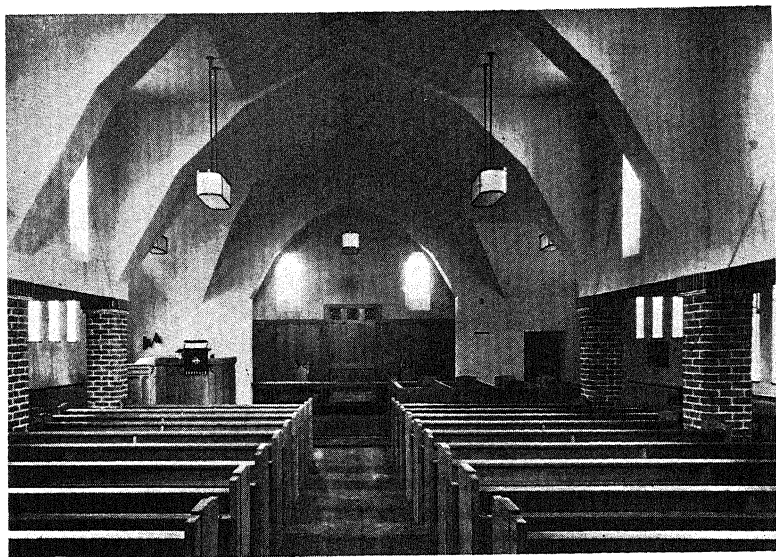


XVIIIb

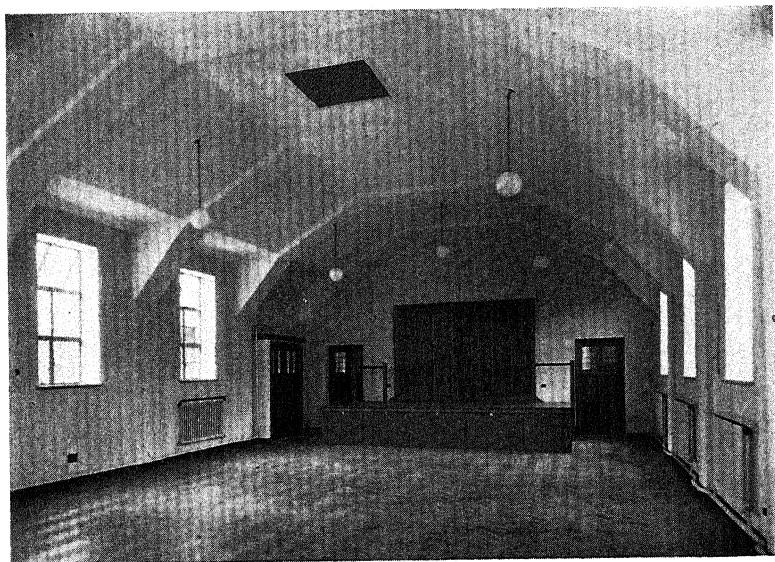
EAST GRINSTEAD METHODIST CHURCH AND HALL

Architects: Smee and Houchin, F.F.R.I.B.A. (also for XVIIIa)





XIX<sup>a</sup>



XIX<sup>b</sup>

EAST GRINSTEAD METHODIST CHURCH AND HALL  
(a) Interior of church; (b) Interior of hall.



XXII

METHODIST CHURCH, NEASDEN, MIDDLESEX

Architect: Ernest B. Glanfield, F.R.I.B.A.











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